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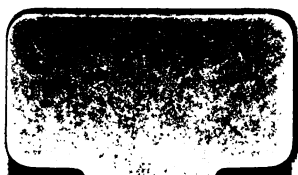
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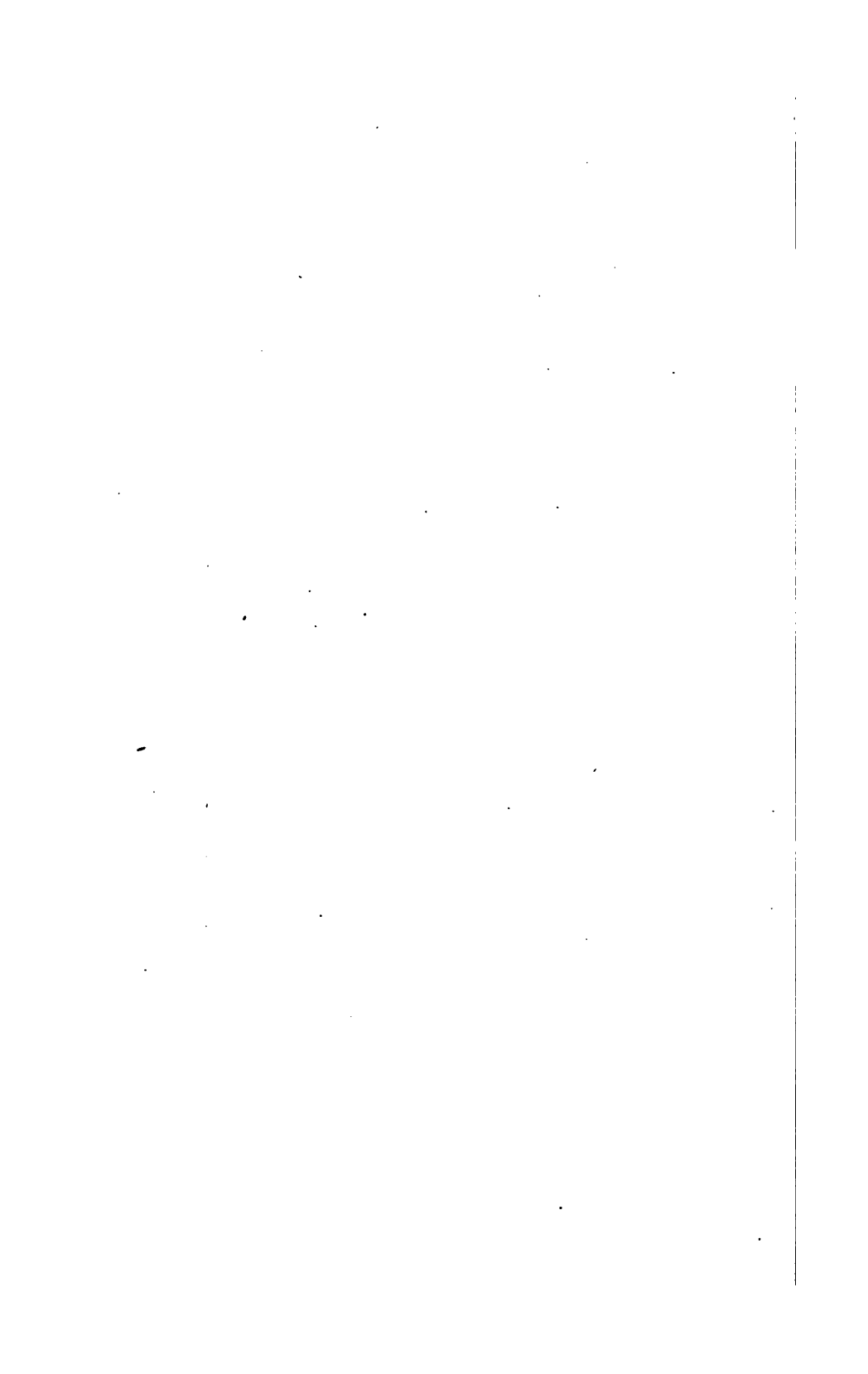
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LEONORE
AND
THE LITTLE COUNTESS.

A Tale.

By A. M. GOODRICH,
AUTHOR OF "GWEN," "THE MYRTLE AND THE HEATHER," ETC.

Perdita: "This dream of mine!
Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther."
Winter's Tale.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1860.

249. v. 486.

WINCHESTER:
PRINTED BY HUGH BARCLAY,
HIGH STREET.

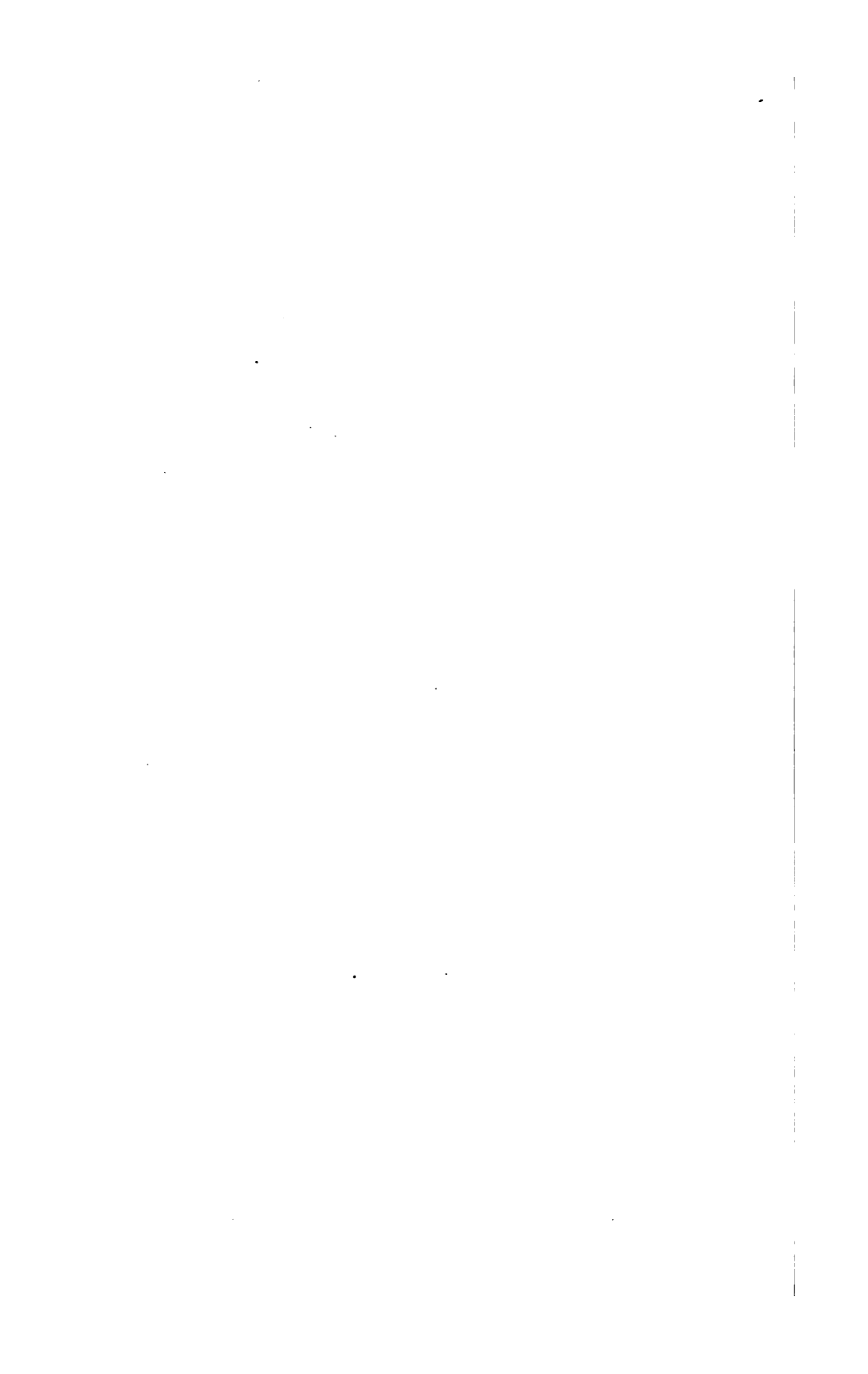


THIS TALE

Is inscribed to my friend,

THE HONOURABLE MRS. S. BEST.

RECEIVE the offering of a simple tale
That tells of generous friends. With you prevail
The self-denying deed, the impulse warm,
And sympathy with kindly power to charm
Full many a grief away, the sinking heart
Recall to life, and hope and health impart.
Not home delights, nor weary hours of pain,
Can round your hearth your every thought enchain.
In joys and sorrows more remote you bear,
With constant love, an ever-ready share ;
And I, the friend of many years, rejoice
In the glad accents of your welcome voice,
In smiles that cheer, in counsels frank and true,
For nothing mean or false may dwell near you.



LEONORE
AND
THE LITTLE COUNTESS.

CHAPTER I.

“Like dews of night with rays of morn.”

Thoughts in Past Years.

IN the hall of the castle of her ancestors lay the little Countess Von Lichtenthal, on a couch placed as near as possible to an open window, in order that she might breathe the balmy air, and look on the fair prospect of hill and valley spread out before her.

The sick child, heiress of half the extent of land over which her eye wandered, breathed a deep sigh of envy as, withdrawing her gaze from the distant mountains, she let it rest on a near object, a beautiful girl of her own age, her

favourite companion, the kinswoman of the intendan of her estate, who was gathering flowers on the terrace of the garden, which was profusely furnished with them. Poor little Nadine's envy was not that poisonous plant that chokes love. Few could have blamed the sigh which she failed to repress. It sprang from no wish to steal another's happiness—only to share it. Leonore's elastic step and glowing cheek spoke an enjoyment of life denied to her; and as she marked the rapid movements of a frame free from languor, and the smoothness of a brow which pain never knit, she felt an ardent longing to be at her friend's side, and to share her sports and her toils. The sigh was followed by a few quiet tears. Nadine scarcely knew that they were falling till Leonore bent over her and kissed them away.

"Dearest lady, this is a day of pain; but see what lovely flowers I have chosen! Let me make a bouquet for you."

And kneeling at Nadine's side, Leonore began to select the freshest and sweetest of her blossoms.

"Those look all too bright for me, Leonore. Let them lie there till they are faded—faded, but still sweet; then I will take them, and put them in my bosom, and they will be more like myself."

Leonore looked up, her dark eyes full of love and pity.

"Not so, my Nadine. How can I cast these flowers carelessly aside? Do I not tend you with constant thought, and strive even to guess your every wish? Does anything grieve me half so much as to find that any has been overlooked? And is it not the same with every one about you? All cherish and love you with the utmost tenderness. How, then, should a blossom, fading through neglect, be any fitting emblem of you? No, Nadine, no!" cried the girl, half playfully, half passionately, striving to while away her young mistress's dejection.

"See here!" she said, singling out a flower from the heap lying before them; "see this snow-white lily! The shower bore it down to the ground, and sullied its purity; but the sun shone forth, gradually it rose up, and turned its head to heaven. Its tears were dried—the earth which clung to it fell off; it expanded, and is now more beautiful than it was this morning. Take this, and wear it. Let it be a promise that pain and languor shall pass away, and that you shall finally rejoice in health. And know you not, dear Nadine, that a very bright morning is often, so often darkened by storms, while the dawn, which is drowned

in tears, breaks out into smiles ere noon, and goes on in increasing serenity till its sun sets without a cloud?"

Leonore threw her arms round Nadine and embraced her tenderly, and Nadine was consoled.

"Leonore," said the little countess, after a short silence, "it is quite settled that I go to Paris this autumn. My poor grandmother desires so much to have me with her. She thinks she can accomplish my cure. She is sure I cannot receive a fitting education elsewhere. She urges my removal for a thousand reasons, and my guardians have resolved to comply with her request. The Countess Justine told me so."

"When?" asked Leonore abruptly.

"Only this morning," replied Nadine, gently pressing her friend's hand.

Leonore returned the pressure, tacitly asking forgiveness for the momentary suspicion that Nadine had kept a secret, and one which touched her so nearly, long from her; then hastily turning away her head, she buried her face on the little countess's couch, and burst into tears. Nadine, regardless of the pain which sudden motion caused her, half sprang from her reclining position, and, putting her arm round Leonore's neck, exclaimed:

"Dear, dear Leonore, do not weep. It is not possible that you can think I will depart without you—that I will consent to place thousands of miles between us, and go to die perhaps in the arms of strangers, for they would all be strange compared with you? You must remain with me. What obstacle exists? You have none you need hesitate to leave. You are necessary to none as you are to me. You love none as you love me. And I, I love you so dearly that no human being could form so cruel a design as that of separating us. We must go together."

Leonore's eyes beamed through her tears.

"But shall we? Shall I accompany you? That would be too much happiness!"

"I never thought of anything else," replied Nadine; "but now you have stirred a fear, we must seek a full assurance. I will do so without delay."

Her tone was firm, and Leonore heard it with satisfaction; but the thought came into her mind, "The Countess Justine will oppose this—she will call it absurd—she will say it is time for me to go back to——" She broke off to reply earnestly to Nadine:

"Yes, without delay. Autumn seems a long way off; but if—if we are to part, we shall want a

long, long time to make up our minds to it, Nadine, to be able to bear it. It would be much better to know the truth, and at once. Don't you feel that?"

"No," replied Nadine; "I do not feel that any time would make such a truth bearable, and I do not mean to bear it. I go to Paris, and you stay here! Why should that be?"

Nadine's confidence was better founded than Leonore's fear. The little countess was accustomed to have her wishes consulted; indeed, they had never yet been such as to call for remonstrance on the part of her guardians. The immense wealth of which they had the administration could well allow of the execution of the schemes of generosity, even though somewhat fanciful, which the young heiress delighted to propose. Nadine was an orphan, without brother or sister to cheer her loneliness, and the physical suffering which had hitherto been her lot rendered all around her eager to procure every alleviation that could be discovered. She had recently found a solace more availing than any of their provision in the companionship of Leonore Körner, a little relative adopted into the family of the intendant, who resided in the immediate vicinity of the castle. The children

were of the same age, although the diminutive frame and timid manner of Nadine made her appear much younger than the high-spirited, blooming girl, who was far less awed by the superior rank of her new acquaintance than moved to love and pity by the sight of her pale cheek and clouded brow.

Leonore, losing her parents, with them lost the means of independence. She was received into the home of her sole remaining kinsman, in which she had not dwelt long before her remarkable beauty, her natural vivacity struggling with recent sorrow, and the history of her early bereavement, combined to attract and attach the heart of Nadine, which, repelling the natural tendency of wealth, of sickness, and of youth, to turn the thoughts on self, was prone to sympathise with all around her, to yield to others a generous preference, and to evince a lively gratitude for every service.

Leonore's spirit was one of those that ill endure to manifest how deeply they feel, and how easily they are wounded. She spoke little of herself. She did not tell her new friend that she had exchanged a home in which she was loved and cherished, for one offered in obedience to duty and necessity rather than from any impulse of affection. She could no longer feel herself

precious to any one, and she had been most precious to her parents. She remembered how they had adored, admired, even wondered at her; gratifying every wish, commenting on every childish act, treasuring up every word, gazing fondly on a beauty perceptible to all eyes, and prophesying great results from her early display of talents. She suddenly found herself transported into a circle of people who continued the occupations which engaged them before her arrival, without acknowledging by even a momentary pause that anything remarkable had crossed their path to call off their attention from the earnest pursuit of gain, and the patient drudgery of obedient labour. The sense of this change cost Leonore nightly tears, shed in the one little nook given her to call her own; but, like most of us, she deemed her condition worse than it really was. The affection of the truest of earthly friends ever proves insufficient, and it is well that it should be so; for which of us could presume to gainsay the poet's assertion,—

“For if one heart in perfect sympathy
Beat with another, answering love for love,
Weak mortals all entranced on earth would lie,
Nor listen for those purer strains above?”

But seldom—may I not say never?—is any

human being utterly destitute of love and sympathy in the breast of some fellow creature, as well as in the unfathomable depths of the bosom of Him who was afflicted in our afflictions, taketh our care upon Him, and "loveth us more than a mother doth."

Leonore was at this very period passing by the offering of as true and generous a heart as ever beat. Karl, the son of the intendant, was a year her senior, and from the day she entered his home she might have read, in a softened tone and gentler step when he approached her, in many a little attempt at unwonted courtesy, in the careful remembrance and execution of wishes betrayed rather than expressed, in a watchful eye and a strong arm, ever ready to come to her aid, proofs that the bashful, untutored boy thought of her and felt for her with a tenderness and delicacy which promised that, beneath a rough exterior, was a fund of such qualities as are the legitimate objects of love and gratitude. Had Leonore been left in a situation possessed of so few charms she would probably ere long have discovered and valued the affection of Karl; but when she attracted the attention of the young mistress of the castle, received a frequent summons to be her playmate, and soon became her daily companion,

he lost all chance of making his way to her heart. Leonore, the object of fondness at once flattering and delightful, had but one fear—that so much happiness could not last. She expected that the removal of her patroness to Paris would realise this dread, but the expectation was groundless. The beneficial effects of her companionship had been observed by those who watched over the little countess with anxiety, and when she declared her averseness to quit Lichtenthal without Leonore, her guardians yielded an easy compliance, and the intendant and his wife had certainly no inclination to contradict the wishes of their mistress.

CHAPTER II.

“Smiles spontaneous and mysterious fears,
And tides obedient to external force,
And currents self-determined as might seem,
And fancies fair, and milder hours of youth.”
COLERIDGE.

On the day preceding the departure of the Countess Nadine, Leonore set out from the castle for the house of her kinsman, in order to take a formal leave of its inmates. When she began her walk she neither felt nor meant to affect regret, nor expected to see it testified by any of those to whom she was approaching. The intendant and his wife were people of sordid natures and parsimonious habits; and though they did not, when their little relative was left destitute, choose to encounter the rebukes of conscience, or of the world, by refusing her the protection of their roof, yet it was a great relief to them to

see the expenses consequent on this act of charity transferred from them to their mistress. The satisfaction which this arrangement afforded both to them and to Leonore had its alloy in certain secret feelings in each of their minds. Leonore, though any attempt to detain her would have excited her indignation, did not see herself so readily dismissed without some pain ; while the intendant and his wife, knowing enough of the world to be aware that the reign of favourites is seldom lasting, and that the young and great are commonly fickle, feared lest at a future period Leonore might return unqualified to be an inmate of their home, and ill disposed to take a share in their toils. Moreover, it annoyed them to see the child whom they had received with coldness, and treated with neglect, so much praised and valued. Why this should be they could not understand, yet read in it a reproach. If there were anything so very wonderful in Leonore, how happened it that they had not made the discovery? Rather than acknowledge any deficiency of perception in themselves they strove in their hearts to despise her still, and to consider the distinctions lavished on her by her patroness as the fruits of mere childish caprice. Though they dared not express these sentiments openly,

they made Leonore sufficiently aware of them to pique her pride, and to confirm her first feelings of aversion. Nevertheless, as she now prepared to bid them farewell, softer sentiments than any she had anticipated stole into her bosom. She began to consider that to their reception of her she owed her happy collocation with the young countess, and, as she grew more sensible of obligations, she resolved to try to feel and to express gratitude.

“Why,” she asked herself, “does this cost me so great an effort? I can throw myself into the Countess Nadine’s arms, and thank her a thousand times for every act of kindness and of love. It is not, then, that I am too proud to be grateful, as Frau Körner said the other day. It is that I cannot bear to hazard expressions which may be misconstrued or repelled.”

The melting ice round Leonore’s heart froze again when she found herself in the little parlour, the bare tables and the formally-set chairs showing that it was no daily abode, nor connected with any pleasant ideas of occupation or sociability. True, Frau Körner and the intendant himself left their work, and suspended their eager superintendence of their domestics to attend her into it, and, seating her between them, began

some formal inquiries as to the plans for their journey, while Karl stood with his back to them in the recess of the window, and neither spoke nor moved. Leonore, desirous to execute her self-appointed task, began to speak not of affectionate regret, but of dutiful gratitude.

"O yes, surely," returned Frau Körner, as soon as she arrived at the meaning of the words which the girl faltered out. "It is well that you should understand how much you are indebted to us. But kin is kin, I always said, and were it to come over again I would not leave a cousin's child without a roof over its head. No doubt it is a fine thing for you to be about my lady, the countess, as you are now, Leonore; but you must not forget how penniless you came to us, and if she were to turn you off, as she may do, were you to cause her displeasure, or were she no longer to feel the want of you, you cannot come back here to eat bread like a fine lady, without doing anything to earn it. No, no; you had best learn all you can where you are now, and so be able, when the countess ceases to need you, at least to gain your living as attendant on some lady as great as herself. Don't cry, child," she added, seeing the tears start from Leonore's eyes, in spite of the strong effort to repress

them; "I only speak plain truths, and all for your good."

Frau Körner never felt so self-complacent as when speaking "plain truths," which were peculiarly irritating and wounding to the listener.

"I have no doubt," said Leonore, rising as she spoke, and assuming as much coldness as she could to conceal the galled state of feeling which Frau Körner dearly loved to produce, and could with wonderful success, "that my generous benefactress intends to bestow on me an education which will prevent my ever again becoming a burden to others, if it please God to grant me health and strength to support myself. But I must return to the countess now, for a longer absence might cause her inconvenience."

Leonore bid the intendant and his wife farewell. It seemed to her that their uncouth son did not even care to exchange that slight testimony of friendliness, for he withdrew as she rose; but when she reached the farmyard gate Karl was holding it for her to pass. He hung down his head, his cheek was crimson. Was it possible that she saw traces of tears on his face?

"Adieu, dear Karl," she cried, with a sudden impulse of affection. "You were always kind to me; I thank you for it."

"No, no," replied Karl, hurriedly; "I can't bear that, Leonore. Are you going away for a very long time?"

"Yes, I think so—I believe so," answered Leonore, hesitating as she recognised with astonishment how much pain her words caused her companion. What was her departure to him? Why should he care for it? She felt a sort of compunction for never having been as yet conscious that her cousin really loved her. "Are you sorry, Karl?" she asked gently. "You will not miss me much, for I have been always at the castle of late. I am sure no one else desires to keep me here."

In spite of the proud struggle which a boy who thought himself half a man, felt himself bound to make against any betrayal of weakness, tears gushed from Karl's eyes. Leonore, at the sight, experienced that sense of oppression which a debt we cannot pay always imposes. When we know not how to render back love for love, we begin to look around for some gift in our power to bestow, as if any offering, save that of the heart, can be of adequate value to those who have given the heart. But a really happy thought occurred to Leonore.

"Dear Karl," she exclaimed, with cordial

warmth, "my white pigeon that I love so much, that eats out of my mouth, and is so tame—I must leave it; and who will take such care of it as I took, unless it be you? May I give it to you? Will you fetch it here?"

Never had Leonore caused Karl such lively pleasure as now; the emotion lit up his countenance with an animation to which it was commonly a stranger, especially in her presence.

"Oh, Leonore! you need fear nothing for your beautiful pigeon; I will take care of it for your sake."

"For my sake!" thought Leonore as she proceeded on her walk. "Why should he do anything for my sake? If he love me so much now, what would his affection have been had I ever regarded him?"

But Karl and Karl's love were soon driven from Leonore's mind again, and the tears she could not give to him were shed abundantly when Count Adalbert, a handsome youth, the cousin of Nadine, and a year her senior, came to meet her at the entrance of the thicket, through which lay her path from the farm; and taking her hand fondly in his own, cried:

"My own beautiful Leonore, remember you are to come back to us again. I shall be waiting

for you to be my bride. I never intend to love any one as I love you. I never will marry any one else, and I will say so now and always, though my mother does not like to hear me, and tells me I am too old to talk such nonsense. Too old! Well, well, I am also too young; but when you return it will be a different thing. Promise me, Leonore, that you will not forget me."

"Forget you!" replied Leonore sadly. "No; I never can forget any of those I love."

"But I will not be remembered as you remember others," exclaimed the young count passionately. "You weep, and you tell me that you love me quite—quite as well as I can love you, and better, for you could not torment me so," he cried, mocking her voice, and tossing away her hand scornfully; then changing his manner to more softness, and even to a seriousness beyond mere boyhood, he continued, "If so, you must remember me as I shall you. You will be a woman soon, my Leonore, and men will woo you. Then must you think on me, and say, 'No, I may not listen. I am not mine own; I am Adalbert's. I promised him to return to be his wife——'"

"No, no, no," exclaimed Leonore, breaking away from him in terror. "Discourse like this

is very wrong; I am sure it is. Were the Countess Justine standing by, you, her son, would not venture to utter such words. If they must be secret they cannot be right. No such promise shall pass my lips. Do not hope for it. You are a child, Count Adalbert, and cannot, must not, make promises of what you will do when you are a man."

"I am fifteen—nearly. I am enough of a man to know my own mind, and when I am more I shall have power also to work it," cried the boy, with flashing eye and curling lip. "Moreover, I never will be thwarted: of that I am resolved. My mother sometimes begins by refusing what I ask, but always ends by granting it. So shall it be in this case. If you do not love me well enough to give this promise, be silent; but you cannot force me to be so; and here, in the face of heaven, as solemnly as if I were a man, and had a thousand witnesses, and the honour of my family were staked on my truth, do I vow, Leonore, that I never will marry any one but you. Now let us see who can make me break this troth!"

He stamped on the ground as he spoke, and then drew himself up in an attitude of proud defiance, with his arms folded on his breast.

Leonore sank down upon the green turf, and weeping, replied :

“ You have done very wrong, Count Adalbert ; but you cannot compel me to do so—least of all by violence and taunts.”

“ Leonore,” said her young companion after a silence, during which a sense of shame was seen on his face, relinquishing the weapons she despised, and snatching a new one, “ I see you are but a child. You love me merely as a child loves. Only promise me one thing. When you are a woman do not give yourself to another without first asking your heart if it has nothing to plead in behalf of Adalbert, your friend and playmate. Then, if you cannot remember me as I ask now, write to me yourself. Do not let me hear from any other that I have lost my Leonore for ever. Ah ! if I did not love Nadine dearly—if I did not believe that she would pine and die without her little nurse, I would not let you go hence. I have asked little enough now, Leonore,” said he, trying to make his manner very humble, in spite of the burst of vehemence which had just escaped from him. “ Must you refuse even this ? ”

“ No,” replied the girl in a low voice, most touching in its extreme earnestness ; “ I think

I may grant this promise." To herself she added, "He believes that I do not love him because I cannot do wrong to please him ; but he shall see—time will show if I deserve his reproach."

At night, when her duties were fulfilled and Leonore was alone, looking out from the casement of her little turret in the castle on the pale moonlight scene, she thought over the events of the day. She fixed her eyes on the still, silent grove in which Adalbert had detained her, and recalled every fond and impatient word which he had used, and could not but ask herself what effect they would have on her destiny as a woman. Leonore, at fourteen, was not the mere child he had called her—happier for her had she been so ; but she had already experienced too many of the changes and chances of life to allow this to be. As she pursued these thoughts a recollection came into her mind which called the colour into her cheek, and made her lip quiver.

"And Frau Körner thinks that I shall be no more than a servant. I am certain neither the Countess Nadine (nor any one else) intends that. Adalbert is quite a spoiled child ; to-day I saw that plainer than ever. How impatient he is ! But then he is so generous and affectionate. No one

ever contradicts him. What wonder that he is wilful? How proud his mother is of his beauty and his high spirit! I cannot love her. She is the only person here who has ever seemed to dislike me. The other day she called me a spoiled child. What! I, a poor orphan, a farmer's daughter! Yes; the Countess Nadine spoils me, and some humour me to please her. She is too kind, too fond. It were well for me had I some older and less partial friend who would reprove my faults, and discern them more clearly than she or I can do. Oh, my mother! why have you left your child alone to face all the difficulties, to resist all the temptations of life?"

Leonore gave vent to the passionate burst of sorrow which the remembrance of her mother often called forth. All the emotions of the day demanded their share in the relief which unrestrained weeping now afforded her—the struggles Adalbert had occasioned, the wounds Frau Körner had inflicted, the compassion Karl had excited, and natural regret on leaving a dear, familiar scene to enter an untried path. But holy thoughts and wise came over the child, and brought by slow degrees composure to her agitated spirit. As she raised her head, and gazed afresh on the glories of the midnight heavens, she remem-

bered that He who appointed to each star its course is no less about the path of the meanest of His creatures. Every changing circumstance is dispensed by Him.

“Why,” she exclaimed, “do I say this or that were better for me, when the best is what He ordains? Young, inexperienced as I am, He hath made me the guardian of my own fate. He hath left none to watch over me with a parent’s care, to control me with a strong hand, to protect me from the faults and follies of my own untutored heart, as well as those of others. He hath given to me alone this task, and what can I do but turn to Him for that aid and direction which my mother’s last words bid me never despair of obtaining. O Father in heaven, look in mercy on Thy child !”

Leonore went to her little couch with the invigorating thought that the support she implored had that very day been lent her, when she had strength to resist the supplications of the dear companion, who had hitherto swayed her in most things to his will. So strong, indeed, was the affection bestowed on the high-spirited, warm-hearted, joyous Adalbert both by Leonore, whose firmness of character would have rendered her a formidable opponent had she been inclined to

oppose, and by the gentle Nadine, that neither had any greater pleasure than that of yielding to him the rule and direction of all their youthful pastimes. His suggestions were listened to as the wisest and the best ; his wishes were preferred to their own ; and their hearts never failed to rejoice in his joy, and to grieve for his disappointments. One of the pleasantest of those day dreams in which poor Nadine often indulged, while bound to her couch of pain, was the devising how her wealth could be the future means of gratifying every wish and advancing every interest of her cousin, who, as nobly born as herself, was of a branch of their family which had fallen into decay and poverty. During the hours Nadine thus whiled away, Adalbert would not unfrequently persuade Leonore to be his companion in active sports, to follow at his side as he rode over hill and valley, fearless as himself in difficulty or danger. She daily became more and more the object of his boyish love and admiration, and it was with all his characteristic frankness and ardour that he poured forth the words which Leonore had heard with terror and misgiving. Opposition, to which he was wholly unaccustomed, increased his vehemence, and the next morning, when, repulsing the services of the

domestics, he insisted on bearing Nadine in his own arms to the carriage (who felt his hot tears fall upon her forehead), he placed his hand on Leonore's arm, and whispered in a voice half of passionate grief, half of angry threatening, "Remember!" ere he sprang to the ground. The carriage rolled heavily away, and Adalbert darted into the woods, taking a path which led to a little eminence, whence he knew it would be latest visible. Leonore bent forward as she passed near the intendant's house. Karl was standing at the turn of the road: he held her white pigeon to his breast. She waved her hand to him. As he retraced his steps homeward he exclaimed more than once, in accents of the liveliest joy, caressing Leonore's much-prized gift:

"She did not forget to look out as she passed! She did not forget!"

CHAPTER III.

“More straining on for plucking back.”

Winter's Tale.

As Karl pursued his path he crossed that by which the young count was returning to the castle. The attention of Adalbert was attracted by the white pigeon; he stopped short; his eye fell on a mark by which he knew the bird to be Leonore's. Karl saluted respectfully the kinsman of his noble mistress; but the fiery boy was not in a mood to accept any attention with graciousness. Adalbert was angry in his grief; sorrow always rendered Karl more gentle; but neither of the boys knew or thought enough of each other to guess that one and the same cause had forced each to shed tears which they would have been alike averse to acknowledge.

“Where didst thou get that bird?” demanded Adalbert with passion. “Is it possible that I see Fraulein Leonore's pigeon? and hast thou

fetches it from the castle? What audacity is this!"

"Nay," replied Karl, protecting with his arm his lately-acquired treasure, "the bird is now mine. Leonore, my cousin, intrusted it to my care."

He felt an irresistible impulse to claim her as his kinswoman, and knew not the pang inflicted by his words. Adalbert's eyes flashed brighter than before. With an impatient gesture of foot and hand, he exclaimed:

"Give it to me, I command thee. No one shall take care of it but myself. I will carry it back to the castle to its own home again."

"But, Herr Graf," continued Karl, still warding off his grasp, "Leonore gave it me with her own hand. I must not yield it to any one."

The servile intendant was at their side; he had observed the meeting of the young count and Karl, he had heard their voices. Amazed and alarmed at the idea of altercation, he placed his heavy hand on Karl's shoulder, and cried, in his harshest accents:

"Eh, sirrah? What! wouldst thou dispute the young lord's will in aught? Know thy place better."

The further to evince the heartiness of his zeal, he shook his son roughly as he spoke. Karl turned round in astonishment and shame; the colour deepened on his cheek and brow, and then faded away.

"What will you, my lord count?" asked the intendant.

"The bird—I wish to have it back again. Leonore had no right to give it away; it was as much mine as hers."

"How so?" burst forth the indignant Karl. "I brought it to her from the nest."

"Silence, boy! Wouldest thou disgrace thyself and me by thine insolence?" thundered his father; and, snatching the dove from Karl's bosom, he addressed himself again to Adalbert: "Shall I bear it to the castle?"

"No, no; give it to me," replied Adalbert, half inclined to relent, ashamed to avail himself of the oppression he saw practised, ashamed to yield up the claim he had advanced. Pride conquered; and, taking the bird, he walked away.

"Don't stand like a fool," said the intendant, turning wrathfully to Karl; "it is not yet noon, and what work hast thou done this day? Because thy cousin, a silly girl, was called up to the castle to spend her time in idleness, dost thou

think there is no occupation for thee but feeding a bird? Away to thy labour."

Karl hung his head.

"No surly looks for me."

The boy retreated hastily; he approached a pile of wood, seized an axe, and set manfully to work. As he dealt his strokes vigorously about him, he thought, with boiling indignation, how well he would like to follow the young count, and wrestle for the prize. He looked at his brawny arm, and knew that he could speedily right himself, and make the slender stripling rue his act of aggression.

"And my own father to stand by to wrong me!"

Anew the boy felt anger, and worked more desperately than before. As he grew fatigued with his exertions, softer thoughts stole in. He was convinced that Leonore would grieve if she could guess the fate of her favourite."

"She knew that the dove could never be so safe as with me. He will not watch over it as I would have done. It will be lost—die of neglect, perhaps."

Karl saw the white dove lying before him, and Leonore mourning over it. Tears started to his own eyes, and with the sleeve of his blouse

he wiped them away. Old Andrew, the oldest labourer on the farm (all the servants loved Karl), crept up to him, venturing to quit his appointed task for a while.

“Don’t fret yourself; I know a wood-pigeon’s nest. I found it last evening, when cutting this very wood. We will go there while the men dine.”

The boy was at once cheered by the voice of kindness, and his face brightened as the landscape does when the golden rays of the sun fall on it. He smiled, thanked the old man, but said :

“No, no ; we must dine with the rest. My father would not be pleased with our absence.”

Karl sat down to his noonday meal with a far lighter heart than Adalbert bore back to the castle.

The young count muttered as he gained the terrace : “I shall reprove Leonore for having presumed to give away our white pigeon without consulting me. She seems to have been bent on provoking me these last days, as if it were not enough to leave me here alone. What shall I do without her or Nadine ? Only my mother, hoarding up money for the winter in —, and for starting me in the Pagerie, which I shall hate. I ought to have entered two years ago at

least; now they will laugh at me for a rustic, and I won't bear to be ridiculed. And that farmer's boy to-day—the young rebel!—he withstood me. I wish that I had struck him with this whip!”

No, no, Adalbert, you entertain no such wish; your conscience, your better self, your native generosity, smite you already for having stood by to see a defenceless one trampled upon. Their secret reproaches make you wander about through the day, quarrelling with every one because you are quarrelling with yourself. The very pigeon seems to shun you, for the events of the morning have startled it out of its habitual tameness.

Unfortunately Adalbert met with an opportunity of indulging the evil spirit which possessed him. He found the Countess Justine on the point of dispatching a missive to the young travellers; something of importance, real or imaginary, had been forgotten. Adalbert in haste added this note to Leonore:

“NAUGHTY Leonore! never half so kind to me as is Nadine! So thou must give away thy white dove without even telling me that thou wouldest do so, when it might in some measure

have consoled me for thy departure. Thou couldst not trust me with it; thou thoughtest I should forget it as I did the——” (A line was drawn through this unfinished sentence, which left it still legible.) Thou oughtest not to have doubted me for one moment; but I have avenged myself. I brought back the pigeon this morning in triumph to the castle; it is perched on my shoulder while I write. It would send sweet messages to its mistress, but I will not transmit one of them.

“Thy very angry

“ ADALBERT.

“ A thousand loves to dearest Nadine.”

It never occurred to Adalbert that Leonore would resent his injustice to Karl.

For two days the count was devoted to his captured pigeon, and the Countess Justine, to whom the sight caused displeasure, adopted the judicious plan of alternate taunt and argument to detach him from his favourite. The countess considered herself the most devoted mother in the world, and often accused her son of ingratitude. He recklessly thwarted her will, despised her injunctions, and even evinced what she considered to be a selfish disregard of her plea-

sure and comfort. No doubt Adalbert was guilty in all these respects. The mode of education which the countess pursued inevitably produced such results. Yet had the boy a warm and generous heart still. He forgave himself, when conscious of having done wrong, less easily than others forgave him; and though his pride of rank on the present occasion taught him that Karl was below consideration, something within whispered that in playing the tyrant he had injured one who, with justice on his side, could not protect himself. It was on the third day after the occurrence we have related that Adalbert again encountered Karl at the entrance of the wood; he would have repelled the supposition that he was loitering about that part of the grounds with a vague idea that they might meet there. Karl started when he saw the young count. The colour brightened on his cheek, it is true; but no wrathful fire kindled in his mild blue eye, nor was his ordinary respectful salutation wanting. Adalbert neither passed on nor spoke; a mixed expression of shame and pride clouded his handsome face. Karl's truly noble nature was stirred within him. Reconciliation is always easier to the injured than to the injurer.

"Pardon me, Herr Graf," he said; "may I ask you if Leonore's pigeon is well?"

No indirect taunt was meant to be conveyed in the words; it simply appeared to Karl that the inquiry was the only mode remaining in which he could discharge the trust reposed in him. Adalbert recognised the singleness of the boy's motive, and held out his hand cordially.

"I was wrong, Karl, to take the bird from thee; and Leonore, she was right to believe it would be better with thee than with me. Come up to the castle for it when thou wilt. It is thine."

Oh, what a glow of happiness flashed over Karl's face at these words! He pressed the young noble's hand to his lips, and Adalbert felt very great.

"Soon tired of his plaything," said the intendant, when at dinner he saw the white pigeon nestling in Karl's bosom; but the generous Karl knew that Adalbert had not relinquished his prize from weariness. The young noble and peasant had understood each other.

Adalbert returned home to find an indignant expostulation from Leonore.

"And you could treat dear, good Karl, my cousin, thus—the only one who, in the cold

dwelling I left, showed me love and consideration? And now the sole token of gratitude which I had to bestow you have wantonly wrested from him. Ungenerous Adalbert! Have you not enough, that you should take from him? And I, before your angry, saucy letter came, often dwelt with pleasure on the delight with which he welcomed my gift, and the care which he would bestow on my favourite. Now I can see him before me, dull and unhappy; and my bird—you are not gentle enough to cherish it as he would. Take it back, Count Adalbert; I insist on it. It is mine; he gave it me, and I give it again to him, and to him only."

Thus wrote the queenly Leonore, resolved to subdue her rebel subject. But there were added two lines, running across a little space that remained, put in as if an after thought, a sudden relenting, gentle as though penned by Nadine:

"I am certain all the while that, before this letter reaches you, you will be your own generous self again, and will have made Karl happy."

Adalbert snatched up a pen. "Three lines, mother, which must go into your letter this very day."

"My darling little scold, thou art right just for once, but in the smallest portion of thy letter.

Karl and the pigeon are cooing to each other. He is not a bad fellow, nor am I, whatever thou mayst say, with thy cold, proud 'you' and thy 'count.'"

Leonore had never used the familiar *du* to Nadine or her kinsman since a day on which the Countess Justine had administered a sharp rebuke of such undue presumption, and begged that she might never again hear her son addressed in similar terms by Fraulein Körner. Leonore's cheek burned with vexation, but she had too clear a sense of justice to resent what she felt she had brought upon herself by a want of circumspection; and not all Nadine's persuasions nor Adalbert's upbraidings could induce her again to transgress.*

The Countess Justine looked up from her crimson velvet writing-book, and her eye fell as if carelessly on the paper addressed to Leonore.

"I am delighted to tell thee, Adalbert, that I am writing to thank his Majesty for thy admission into the Pagerie. It is quite time for

* In this note of Adalbert's the distinction of which he (giving an example of the truth of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's observation that "children are the only democrats") complains is plainly marked; but in after pages I shall not adhere to a mode of expression unfamiliar to English ears, and to some disagreeable.

thee to live among *boys* of thine own age," she said with emphasis.

"What!" cried Adalbert, "am I to leave my horses, my dogs—all with which Nadine's generosity supplies me—and the old huntsman?"

Another week elapsed, and Schloss Lichten-thal was deserted and shut up.

CHAPTER IV.

“Shall wounded spirit find relief
From such a sacred grief?
It is alone within Thy breast,
Dear God of peace and rest,
Bidding us leave with Thee the past.”

Thoughts in Past Years.

THE journey of the little countess to Paris was accomplished without any material diminution of her strength, so skilful was the arrangement of her travelling couch, and so easy were the stages by which she advanced. The girls had heard of the brightness and gaiety of the French metropolis, and they had never visited their own beautiful capital; the only German town with which they were acquainted was peculiarly gloomy in aspect; great was their surprise and disappointment when, on reaching the residence of Nadine's grandmother, in the most secluded part of the Faubourg St. Germain, they could perceive

very little superiority to it in cheerfulness. Nor was the interior of the Hôtel Château * * such as to dispel the first melancholy impression which they had received. The present occupant of it, the daughter and the widow of two of the noblest families existing under the *ancien régime*, had suffered severely in the terrible days of the Revolution. Her only son had died on the scaffold, a fate esteemed honourable by his mother, who would willingly have laid her own grey head beneath the guillotine for the descendants of those for whom he bled. The Marquise de Château * * retired to Germany, a country in which she owned relatives. There her eldest daughter had married the father of Nadine. The health of the younger, Clémence, had never recovered the shock which the death of her beloved brother occasioned it: she sank into the grave. After the loss of her remaining child, Julie von Lichtenthal, the marquise returned to her native land. Her chagrin was severe when she discovered that the nephew who, on the Restoration, recovered the lands and titles of her childless son, was proud not to be ranked among the number of those "who had learned nothing and forgotten nothing," and embraced with ardour the views of the day. The Marquis Louis had a kind heart,

and he felt a respectful consideration for the prejudices of one who had proved the sincerity of her attachment to them by suffering. His frank good nature softened his aged kinswoman's asperity so far that she could not refuse him a welcome when he graced her gloomy abode with his butterfly appearance; yet she saw that he was so little adapted to abide in it, that she half forgave him the purchase of an elegant modern house in the Champs Elysées. She smiled when he came, but she scarcely invited him to return.

More than once had the marquise craved the sight of her only grandchild. She had even encountered the fatigue of a journey to see her, at an age when the speechless babe could only gaze up into her face with the earnest eyes of infancy, as if to ask why she wept over it. And she, in reply, sobbed, "My Clémence, my poor Clémence! why must I call thee Nadine? Just so did my child fix her wondering looks on me when the tears I shed for her father fell on her brow."

Thus it was; the household names most familiar and dear to her were strange among the strangers with whom she had left her daughter. Many other differences made her resolve to return to Paris, and little Nadine was denied to her, though she prophesied that the child would never

be reared in Germany, the climate of which had proved fatal to her mother. Nevertheless, Nadine's guardians refused to read the verification of her grandmother's prognostics in her infirm health, and it was not until she had reached her fifteenth year that they resolved to try the effects of change of climate on it.

The young travellers were ushered into the desolate-looking apartment in which the marquise, in an habitual garb of mourning, spent the greater part of her time. She rose to meet them with a stateliness of manner peculiar to her, but which occasionally broke down under the influence of strong emotion.

"This is the Comtesse Nadine von Lichtenthal," said their attendant governess, with an officiousness which sprang from the awkward occurrence of Leonore, during their journey, being frequently supposed to be the more important personage of the two children. But Madame de Château * *, in a tone indicative of displeasure, replied :

"You need not tell me so ;" and, taking the slight, pale little girl in her arms, she embraced her tenderly, and bestowed rather a colder reception on Leonore than she would otherwise have done.

Nadine, singularly alive to every change of tone and manner in those with whom she held intercourse, was immediately sensible that Mademoiselle Adèle was reproved and vexed, and Leonore slighted, and she could not be happy. The first moment that she was alone with her grandmother she drew nearer to her, and said :

"I am not surprised, dearest grandmamma, that you did not need to be told that I was Nadine, because you knew that I was sick and small ; but as we travelled people often took Leonore for the countess, she is so tall and so handsome."

"Certainly I could not expect to see thee as robust as that German girl," replied Madame de Château * * ; "but I knew thee, my child, not merely by thy pallor"—her voice trembled—"but because thy little face and figure are the very repetition of those of thy aunt Clémence."

Nadine did not know how rarely the old lady pronounced the name of her child ; but she saw what it cost her to do so now. She felt herself a second time clasped to her grandmother's bosom, and she whispered in her low, sweet tone, "I like to resemble her, if you like it."

When alone with Leonore (she had stipulated that they were to share the same sleeping apart-

ment) Nadine repeated her grandmother's words, and again observed :

"I am very glad that I am like my aunt Clémence, because every one loved her, and it makes my grandmother love me. It seems to me that this resemblance is one of the blessings which God gives me, Leonore ; for you see that, coming here among strangers, I wear on my exterior a charm that wins hearts. It would have been vain to have sent me in search of health where people looked coldly on me. Then, too, this gloomy habitation—that vast court, the gates of which seem to exclude all the world—no flowers, no birds, nothing to cheer—if I did not know that I gladden those who dwell here, I could not stay—I am sure I could not."

"It is indeed a change from Lichtenthal," said Leonore, repressing a sigh ; "and then I have not your spell. I could see that Madame de Château * * almost disliked me from the first, for being stronger and taller than you are. She thinks me very presumptuous."

"No, no, Leonore," replied Nadine earnestly. "If she love me, she must love you for my sake ; and we—we must love her for the sake of all that she has suffered."

From the day of her arrival Nadine was first

in the home and in the thoughts of her grandmother, as she had been from infancy first in her own home and in the thoughts of all who came around her. Yet this concentration of interest failed to have its ordinary ill effect on her character. The love she inspired, and the love she felt—these were Nadine's safe guards. Proud or selfish she could not learn to be, for her heart was ever overflowing with gratitude, and with the desire to do something in return for the kindness lavished on her. And, as Nadine said, so it proved. The marquise grew to love Leonore for Nadine's sake, though never but as an appendage to Nadine did she think of her. She soon began to perceive, as did all who had to do with the children, that Leonore was very necessary to Nadine's well-being; in fact, far more so in the gloomy Faubourg than in the green glades of Lichtenthal, where the joyous Adalbert was ten times a day beside her couch. The energy of Leonore was of material service to Nadine; it invigorated her mind and body. Leonore roused her; she assisted her to wrestle with, and triumph over, disease; she sustained her fainting hopes, and led her to endure with constancy the severe discipline by which alone the Parisian physicians declared that she must

expect to regain health, and to which Madame de Chateau * * exacted a rigid obedience. Days and nights found her Nadine's unwearied attendant. At length it pleased Heaven to grant the boon which was almost equally necessary to the happiness of the two friends. Day by day Nadine revived ; day by day the care of Leonore received a richer reward. Health dyed the cheek of the once languid girl, brightened her eye, and lent vigour to her movements. What exquisite enjoyment did the change afford to both ! None who have not long languished on the bed of pain, and that, too, in the season of youth, to which every concomitant of sickness is peculiarly repugnant, can imagine the gushing joy of heart which the first sensations of health confer. None who have not watched with agonising alternations of hope and fear each varying hour of the being they tenderly love—who have not grieved over every privation which they have seen patiently and sweetly acquiesced in, over every pang which they have known silently endured—can tell what a weight was removed from Leonore's breast when she saw Nadine released from the yoke of disease. Fervent were the outpourings of gratitude of these two young hearts !

From the time of her arrival in Paris, the

"little countess," as she was still frequently designated, had carried on at least a semblance of studying all the usual branches of education. If the failure of strength forced her to desist, she would by no means allow Leonore's instruction to be interrupted, for she felt more interest in the progress made by her favourite than by herself. Some children, when they have a companion in any pursuit, are quickly stirred to emulation. Not so with Nadine. All her anxiety was for Leonore: for her she was hopeful and ardent, for herself dull and despairing. She watched the development of Leonore's talents (which were remarkable) with triumph, and administered means for their cultivation with delight, while Leonore replied to her generous affection with devoted love and strenuous exertion.

Nadine was filled with astonishment that the marquise did not enter more into her enthusiastic admiration of Leonore. "It is not that grand-mamma is cold; I should be very ungrateful if I deemed her so. Everything that concerns my pleasure and my health animates her. She takes such trouble for me that I feel ashamed of her exertions; but I cannot induce her to bestow half the notice I desire on Leonore. I wonder if Leonore perceives this."

Yes; Leonore did perceive it, but took it less to heart than did Nadine, and perhaps understood it better.

The Marquise de Château * * in her sable garb, the abiding record of her woes, was an object of mysterious interest to the two girls. They mused over all that she had passed through, and inquired of themselves how they could have wrestled with so terrible an existence. For her young chivalrous uncle, Nadine substituted the impetuous Adalbert rushing on danger; she hid her face in terror, and felt that, like Clémence, she must have died.

Leonore contemplated the same object, but with a less fainting heart. She framed schemes for the rescue of those she loved, such as brave women have planned and executed, and believed that, even had they been all defeated, she might have lived on, like the marquise, with a lifelong grief. "But ah!" she thought, "I fear I should have proved more stern—more grave one cannot be—less resigned, less forgiving." At these moments she felt that she could quite understand how the sole pulse still beating, the sole nerve yet sensitive in the frame of the marquise, should be those which throbbed at the approach, which answered to the touch, of her young relative—the

likeness of her lost child. She was able to say, "She loves me a little for Nadine's sake, that is enough—all I ought to ask or expect; and I—I reverence her, and I could love if she would allow me." Then with generous consideration, and a touch of her native dignity, Leonore addressed herself to Nadine, who one day evinced dissatisfaction with the somewhat icy kindness of Madame de Château * * 's demeanour towards her, saying:

"Don't desire more for me than is given. We both love you—there is that link between us: is it not a strong one?"

"Noble Leonore!" thought Nadine. "Deep thinking, deep feeling! My grandmother, who, like you, is both, doth not bestow enough consideration on you to recognise your rare endowments."

The marquise herself was little aware of the impression she made on the two girls. She had not as yet bestowed any strict scrutiny on the character of either. It was chiefly on Nadine's health that she dwelt. Absorbed in the past, the emotions which her grandchild awakened seemed like a receding tide, bearing her ever farther back.

Fortunately for the young girls, Madame de

Château * * thought it advisable to provide them with a friend better suited to their age than herself, and whom she was willing to invest with all her own authority.

“ You must come to me often, my dear Léonie, now that this child is with me. I don’t wish her to fall entirely into Mélanie’s hands ” (Mélanie was the wife of the Marquis Louis), “ though I must allow that my nephew and niece are very kind and good-natured ; but I never can feel confidence with respect to those whom she may meet with in their *salon*.”

This was the address of the marquise, soon after the arrival of her grandchild, to Madame de Fleury, the most intimate friend and most favoured visitor that she had. The daughter of a contemporary of Madame de Château * *, Madame de Fleury had neither imbibed all her prejudices, nor yet ran counter to them, as did her own relatives. She loved the old lady with all the warmth of an affectionate heart, and though remarkably sincere when endeavouring to console and to cheer her, would not bring into the foreground the little variances of her opinions and actions. She laughingly accepted the charge now intrusted to her, which, of course, became more arduous as Nadine’s improving health

allowed her to mix more in society. The girls grew extremely fond of their pleasant companion, and Nadine had never been so well satisfied with any person's demeanour to Leonore as with hers. Childless herself, the society of each of them afforded great delight to Madame de Fleury. She loved Nadine for her gentle amiability, and cared little for her rank, birth, or wealth. She admired Leonore for her beauty and the nobleness of her nature, and was quite regardless of her being the intendant's daughter, and dependent on her patroness's generosity. If she had a preference, it was for Leonore; she was fascinated by her powers of mind and her talents, which far surpassed those of Nadine. "She is a glorious creature," she thought; "I wish she were mine." At first she greatly pitied Nadine, because she was ill; afterwards she felt yet more compassion for Leonore, for she began to perceive the seeds of more prolonged suffering in the falseness of the position which she occupied.

CHAPTER V.

“ Within her heart was his image,
Clothed in beauty of love and youth, as last she beheld him.”

Evangeline.

THE health of the Countess Nadine being re-established, and her twentieth year attained, the solicitations of her relatives of the house of Lichtenthal for her return to her native country and court, and her due assumption of all her hereditary dignities, became urgent. The sentiments of Nadine's own heart induced compliance, though she could not quit her grandmother without sincere sorrow, nor close entirely without regret the pleasant episode of her Parisian life. Madame de Château * * offered no opposition to this intention, as Nadine gradually broke it to her; to resign her grandchild was a new and deep grief, but, like past ones, it was silent.

It appeared that the countess and Leonore both regarded it as a matter of course that the

latter should also return. Not that the beautiful *protégée* was allowed to depart without many an earnest entreaty to remain. Either her ambition was excessive, and her head turned by the flattery lavished on her, or else neither pride nor vanity was to have any voice in this important decision, for one after another she calmly and firmly declined proposals as brilliant and as advantageous as she could ever expect to receive. Nadine secretly rejoiced in her rejections of all her suitors, for a marriage in Paris would go near to separate them for life.

Madame de Château * * would have remained for ever ignorant of the *grand succès* which had attended Leonore's *début*, had the knowledge of it been withheld till she inquired concerning it, or gathered the slightest hint of it from Leonore's own lips. But Nadine rejoiced to declare it, and Madame de Fleury also was desirous that it should reach the ears of her old friend. She did not quite understand the marquise's reception of the fact. She was at no loss to read the slight elevation of the shoulder, the compression of the lip, the spark of fire that rekindled in the faded grey eye, as Madame de Château * * heard of noble suitors kneeling at the feet of the intendant's cousin ; but why did she betray uneasi-

ness at the proposal of an alliance with the rich banker or silk merchant? Be the cause what it might, she was unusually gracious in her demeanour to Leonore from the day that her determination to return to Germany was known to be inflexible. This resolution, on the contrary, caused sincere regret in Madame de Fleury, the kind and clear-sighted friend of both Nadine and Leonore. She even went so far as to address the latter in private, in order to attempt to open her eyes to her true position, and to prepare her for the change which she foresaw, and believed would be keenly felt. Trespassing on what with Leonore was forbidden ground, Madame de Fleury thought it best to adopt a playful tone.

"Why do you not remain with us, *ma chère*? You could marry M. Alfred, the millionaire, I know. He strove to conciliate me before he offered you his hand. Why refuse, silly child?"

"Simply because his francs could not make me forget himself," replied Leonore proudly.

"You think you are so beautiful that you must triumph everywhere? Ah! not among those dull Germans. Nothing freezes the blood like fashion. Here people call you *la belle Allemande*, and no more is asked; but there, Leonore, you know inquiries will be pushed

farther, and the haughty *aristocrate* will repel the advances of one whom she will at once despise and envy. I am speaking terrible truths, dear child," said Madame de Fleury, as she saw Leonore turn from red to white; "but it is because I love you, and would save you from the experience of them. You shake your head. You will not stay with us. Well, promise me that if you are unhappy, if you wish to return, you will write to me, and my home shall be yours till you possess one of your own; and never fear, Leonore, you shall be as fastidious as you please, for the longer I can keep you the better I shall like it."

Leonore only listened to her kind friend with silent tears. They spoke a grateful sense of her tenderness, and they also brought some relief to the anguish with which she smarted, without accusing the hand that inflicted the wound of aught but love.

"Nadine will never change," at length she said.

"I do not think she will," replied Madame de Fleury. "Her nature is affectionate, and singularly true; but her circumstances will change, and no longer permit you to be all to each other, as you fancy yourselves now."

Leonore blushed, and looked disturbed.

"She will soon lay down the independence she now possesses. Doubtless some grand alliance will be sought for her," continued Madame de Fleury. "Moreover, to speak frankly, I think she is scarcely to be justified in making the attempt to which we have alluded. She has selected you for her own friend, and has, I allow, made an admirable selection ; but she has not the right, and she will find that neither has she the power, to force others to yield to your merits that which your birth cannot claim. You have not the real 'open, Sesame,' and you know no other grain will work the charm. Dear Leonore, I should not venture to urge these facts so barbarously on you, unless I offered the means of escape. I leave you to consider whether you will avail yourself of them, and I shall not accept the hasty refusal which has passed your lips to-day."

Madame de Fleury departed, and Leonore passed some time in bitter reflections.

"What is to become of me? What is my future lot to be, and how am I to meet it? Has Madame de Fleury torn from my eyes a flimsy veil, or did I already know well all that she has placed before them?" As she asked

herself these questions her countenance assumed an expression of deep despondency. "Oh! if I loved *him* less," she continued, "could I encounter so much of humiliation and of insult as I foresee? Yet the cause of my endurance must be hidden. Madame de Fleury, when I persist in retaining a position which she perhaps has but too truly described, will condemn me, and others with her, because none may read my heart. They will deem me an intruder, with no delicacy of mind, no respect for myself or for them, willing to force my way at any expense where I have no right to enter, presuming on the affection and the inexperience of one so young as Nadine. Madame de Fleury said that she would do wrong in presenting me as her friend and companion at —, as she has done here. She will be blamed, and I shall be despised. Will this be just? Madame de Fleury evidently thinks it so. What, then, can I do? Return to my own kindred? And Adalbert—if he love me still; if he love me as I would be loved, as I love; if—this is the most important question of all—his happiness be in my hands, will seek me there. But does he love me still? We have been so long separated. He has never seen me as I am. We were children. Madame de Fleury said I

thought myself so beautiful ; she did not mean that others do not."

Leonore's eye involuntarily glanced at the mirror near at hand, in which her form was reflected. Recollections of the admiration lavished on it crossed her mind, a rich glow dyed her cheek. But almost instantly she covered her eyes with her hands, and exclaimed :

" O how these thoughts degrade me ! What ! could I be content to owe his love to my beauty ? Could I value it so bestowed ? No, no ; it is the gift of the heart he once coveted which I desire that he should value. Does he covet it still ? If so, may not the ardour which has ever characterised him overcome all the obstacles between us ? Are there any which a brave and loving nature could not trample under foot ? Nadine sees no difficulty in retaining me in the same close friendship and companionship that have hitherto existed between us. No one ever opposes her. Her wealth and rank give her much power. She gains people's affections so quickly that they always wish to please her. She is better acquainted with Germany than Madame de Fleury can be. I know I cannot go to court, even were I Adalbert's wife."

Leonore stopped short. A keen sense of

mortification checked her. She took several hasty turns in her chamber, and exclaimed :

“ I will speak to Nadine. I will tell her that it is better for me to return to my home.”

But Leonore could not address Nadine with candour. Her lips were sealed even to that dear friend. When she rejected with trembling and tears, but with firmness, the vow which Adalbert, accustomed to see his will operate as a law, had uttered in boyhood, asserting that it never should be broken in manhood, she considered that her rejection, if sincere (and it was perfectly so), forbade her to acquaint any other human being with the words which had passed his lips. As far as action was concerned it must be as though they had never reached even her ear. But it was impossible that she should forget them, for every day made her more sensible that her earthly happiness depended on their fulfilment, while every day's experience of the world increased her knowledge of the difficulty of their being fulfilled. Leonore, possessing little hope save that

“ Which scarce can know itself from fear,”

could not, without some complacency, behold the promise of her childhood far surpassed in the beauty of her womanhood, nor fail to recognise

that her careful cultivation of her natural gifts placed her in mental attainments and in accomplishments far above the generality of women in the class of society to which, not from ambition, she aspired. "Need Adalbert blush to ratify his early choice?" she had sometimes asked herself with a "proud humility." And when among the suitors for her hand there appeared not only the millionaire, whose wealth gained him admission into those circles to which accident or merit had introduced her, but more than one of high rank and noble blood, she could not refrain from the inquiry, "If these esteem it no degradation to ally themselves with me, why should Adalbert?" Still something within anticipated Madame de Fleury's declaration, that in the court of her native land the disadvantage of mean birth never could be overlooked, and that the haughty family of Lichtenthal would be the last to forgive it. Now on the point of returning to Germany, the decision of her fate was at hand. Her position as Nadine's friend was the most favourable she could occupy, while a return to the house of the intendant would test Adalbert's love and resolution to the utmost. "So let it be," was at one moment the exclamation of the high-spirited girl; then with the thought of Lichtenthal came back

the memory of those happy days when she and Nadine and Adalbert were together. She felt, "Can there be danger in returning to it? No, no; his heart must lead him thitherward, rather than to any other spot. It is not there that danger lies. But still Madame de Fleury says that Nadine will do wrong. I must at least give her full power to do right."

CHAPTER VI.

“We have shared alike
The sun and shower, and all that Heaven hath sent us.”
Philip Van Artevelde.

“WHEN you arrive at —— I should like to visit my relations,” said Leonore, somewhat abruptly breaking a silence which had appeared to Nadine of unusual duration.

They were driving in the Bois de Boulogne, and Leonore seized the opportunity of speaking without interruption on a subject to which she had given much consideration.

“Surely, Leonore,” was Nadine’s reply, “there is no pressing necessity for seeing your grim cousin, my worthy intendant. When I go to Lichtenthal it will be quite soon enough.”

“I think it will be desirable for me to go at once. You will find your relations and your friends at ——. You will not require me; I shall be better at home.”

"Since when, O Leonore ! have you learned to divide your home from mine ?" asked Nadine, her eyes filling with tears.

"Only since I have learned to believe that it were good for you to divide them. I think that your family may regret that you have ever admitted the kinswoman of your intendant to such close intimacy. They will, perhaps, deem that you have exalted me strangely and unbecomingly in making me your companion and your friend, and surely it were fitter for us both that I should retire, rather than be thrust back."

"And who can thrust you from my home ?" asked Nadine with unusual energy ; "and will you leave it without consulting my feelings and wishes ? You speak calmly of separation, and I cannot endure to hear of it. But this is natural. It is I that lose all in losing you, as you say, my companion and my friend, my support and my delight, in health and in sickness. Your independent spirit cannot understand my reliance on you. You could not thus cling to another, however dear. You propose to depart ; you feel capable of the effort ; but have you asked yourself how I can bear to be deserted ?"

"I have always found you able to do all that duty required of you," replied Leonore, in a voice

almost inaudible from emotion, which she betrayed by no other symptom. "O what painful efforts have I seen you make!"

"But you were there to brace me. Now that Heaven vouchsafes a little ease and happiness, you propose a wanton destruction of both. If my relations judged it well that you should be near me in sickness, they must not rudely tear you from me in health. If a tender plant needed support, would any, the first moment that it raised its head and revived, snatch away the prop they had placed? No, no; my *friends* can never wish to banish you; and would you demand a voluntary exile? Whence is this idea, as absurd as novel?"

These words, uttered half in playfulness, half in tears, silenced Leonore, whose own heart echoed every sentiment that Nadine uttered, and who already reproached herself for having proposed this temporary abandonment of her post. How could she suddenly withdraw the services which her benefactress still desired, and to which her munificence and her kindness fully entitled her? Had the world, had Nadine's relations, any right to deprive her of them while they were necessary to her?

"Dear Nadine," (in private the friends did

not deny themselves the use of familiar appellatives,) "ask Madame de Fleury's opinion. She knows the world; she loves us——"

"Ah! it was for this that she went to your chamber this morning. I am glad all this great wisdom does not emanate from yourself."

Leonore repeated Madame de Fleury's strongest arguments, and was again convinced by them. Not so Nadine, who was enough of a spoiled child to say, and to feel at the moment, that she should love Madame de Fleury less for having tried to take Leonore from her.

"This is unjust," said Leonore. "I have done wrong in repeating her words. If true, they ought to have the same authority from my lips as from hers. If you wished to know her opinion you ought to have heard it from herself."

"It is because such arguments are not based on truth that they have no authority at all," cried Nadine; "and I tell you, Leonore, the pain which this subject gives me, the tears it has already cost me, make me feel very ill."

All the rest of the day the little countess's pale cheek and heavy eye spoke reproachfully to Leonore. Madame de Fleury was to come in the evening to take them both for the last time to the house of some friends with whom they had held

pleasant intercourse. When the hour arrived Nadine declared herself unequal to the exertion, but wished that Leonore should keep the engagement, as Madame de Fleury also desired. Leonore, after one lingering look at Nadine, one tender kiss, departed.

"I hope the air of Germany will suit the countess," said Madame de Fleury, with a sigh, as she seated herself in the carriage. "Poor little thing! she really appears very delicate even now."

"Do you think so?" exclaimed Leonore, no longer able to suppress her own uneasiness. "Ah! her altered looks are all in consequence of the conversation you held with me this morning. I tried to convince the countess that it would be right for me to return to my relations when she goes to ——. I have half broken her heart by speaking of leaving her. I have made her think me very unfeeling, very ungrateful——" She stopped abruptly.

"My poor children!" said Madame de Fleury kindly.

These words drew a few tears from Leonore, but she dried them quickly, and continued in a subdued tone:

"I am afraid, madame, we do appear to you

really childish ; but to see Nadine look so ill that you should immediately remark it, has pained me much ; nay, it has inflicted a self-reproach that I cannot endure. I feel your kindness, I value your opinion ; I cannot forget that you consider Nadine's present intentions erroneous ; I have thought of a plan which, it appears to me, the countess might pursue without displeasing or wronging any one, or incurring blame. May I place it before you ?”

“ Certainly, *ma bonne* Leonore.”

“ When we arrive at —— I will never accompany Nadine into society. Even if I am included in the invitations to her I will decline them. She shall always find me in her home, and it is only there that she really needs me.”

“ This self-sacrifice would not be required if you consented to stay with me.”

“ But to remain in Paris would make Nadine almost as unhappy as to return to my cousin.”

“ I think not, unless her affection be selfish, which I never have been accustomed to consider it.”

“ Pray do not so consider it now. I assure you I would rather return to Germany on these terms than remain here,” said Leonore earnestly. She paused, for she felt that in bestowing

imperfect confidence on Madame de Fleury she was on the brink of deceiving her, and she hastily added: "Oh! do not believe that in this I am unselfish. It may seem so, but it is not true. I am doing what I like best. I am punishing poor Nadine, not myself."

"Perhaps you would even prefer returning to the farm?" asked Madame de Fleury, at a loss to understand her young friend, and with some curiosity to fathom the mystery.

"No, that would be terrible," replied Leonore with a shudder.

Madame de Fleury was silent. After a while she observed:

"If you must remain with the countess I do not think you can propose any plan of behaviour of more dignity and propriety. Such conduct may possibly—as it ought—gain for you a position which you will not feel to be degrading. And now, Leonore, I will show you that I am of a forgiving temper, for I still say to you, come to me when you like. But ask me no more advice, for I see plainly there is something you will not tell me which influences your consideration of the matter. While this is the case I cannot give adequate counsel."

Leonore felt that her friend was alike kind

and penetrating. She was not sorry that the carriage stopped at this moment, and left her only time to express her gratitude by a silent pressure of the hand.

There were none in the circle which cordially greeted Madame de Fleury and her young companion for whom the latter entertained any great degree of affection ; yet the conversation which she had just held, and the knowledge that the meeting was for the last time, made her feel sad. "I shall never be thus welcomed again," she thought. The frigid Countess Justine was frowning on her ; the intendant and his frau rose sternly before her ; Karl was forgotten, and where Adalbert should have been there was a mist over the picture, for she knew not what Adalbert was, what he would be. This was the first evening of sensations of a nature with which Leonore was to grow but too familiar, when all around seems to smile, and all within is known to ache.

At length the time for departure arrived, and every one loved and regretted Leonore the more for the shade of melancholy which had rested on her countenance throughout the evening. Seated again beside Madame de Fleury in the carriage, she leaned back and did not attempt to converse. Her friend took her hand kindly, and knowing

that she could not understand all that engaged her thoughts and feelings, spoke that which was uppermost in her own mind, wishing that it might strike some chord in unison :

“Thou canst always return.”

Leonore did not reply. A sudden flash of light showed her in tears. The carriage turned into the court ; a hasty good night was uttered, and Leonore sprang out. As she passed Madame de Château * * 's chamber she was surprised to observe the door open. The marquise herself, though the hour was late, advanced. The light of the lamp illuminated her figure, now clothed in white. Leonore clasped her hands, for a moment forsaken by her ordinary self-command.

“Nadine is ill !”

“No, my child, Nadine sleeps, and I would speak with you. Come into my room.”

Leonore followed her, closing the door, while the marquise placed herself in an arm-chair, and pointed to a lower seat beside her for her companion.

“Mademoiselle Körner——”

Leonore could not help murmuring in a suppressed tone, “Leonore, say Leonore.”

“Well, Leonore,” repeated the marquise

with a smile, which, of rare occurrence, was the more striking in its benignity, and she actually bent forward and imprinted a kiss on the girl's forehead. Yet Leonore did not feel herself loved. "I do not say, my child, that Nadine has given us cause for serious uneasiness to-day, yet her pale looks cannot have failed to carry back your thoughts as well as mine to the period of her past sufferings. I dread the fatigue of travelling, the excitement of change in all around her, the ungenial climate to which she goes. I dread all these things for my child, and yet I let her go. *They* call her, and I raise no counter voice. Now it is to you, Leonore Körner, that I look for my best comfort and aid. I know well how you love this dear flower—this last blossom that hangs on the stem. I have watched narrowly, till I am as convinced of your affection as of my own, and now I bid you to tend and to cherish her hereafter as you have hitherto, when these eyes shall never, never more behold her."

Her aged voice trembled with emotion.

"You have judgment and courage, *ma fille*," she continued, signing to Leonore not to interrupt her; "you will not let her see you tremble when she turns pale. You have always nerved her to the endurance of pain. You owe her a

vast debt of gratitude for all she has bestowed on you. Pay it in devotion. Let her fill every thought, engross every care. I bind you to her in life and in death. I bid you not to quit her side, for in health and in sickness she needs you alike. The accomplishments she has taught you amuse her when nothing else does. I have observed their salutary effect, and have thanked Heaven, that hath richly endowed you. Go, Leonore, be true to your benefactress, and God will reward you. Go, and take my blessing for all you have done, all you will do."

The marquise, embracing the girl, pressed a weighty purse into her hand, and leaned back in her chair exhausted, and pallid as death. Leonore shrank from her embrace, and from her gift.

"Madame," she said, "this is not needful, this is not acceptable. Pardon me, but I cannot make it so. My heart does not respond to your exhortation. It is not thus that I have loved and cherished Nadine. Forbear, I entreat you, forbear to oppress me with commands."

The marquise looked upon her in much amazement, an expression of sternness gradually coming over her features.

"I have misread you, child."

"Yes, always," thought Leonore, but she did not interrupt her by any uttered reply.

Madame de Château * * again relapsed from her rigidity, and bowing down her head, murmured :

"Ah! all is changed. Thou art no second Pauline. How could I dream that such beings yet existed?"

Leonore well knew that Pauline had been the faithful attendant of the marquise and her daughters through all their trials. Tears sprang to her eyes; she advanced one step nearer to Madame de Château * *, and exclaimed :

"Pardon me, madame. Perhaps I, too, can love and serve, only leave me free."

"Free! free! I suppose Louis hath taught thee this. Go, child. I would have had thee sensible that it is thy highest privilege to serve the Countess Nadine."

Leonore withdrew, and in her chamber reflected on the stinging fact recognised for the first time, that Madame de Château * * had never regarded her as any other than Nadine's menial.

"Here is probably the explanation of her coldness—of all that has hitherto perplexed me. This, too, dictated her choice of a present well befitting the position she assigned to me."

And Leonore, in that hour of wounded love and pride, refused to discern that the marquise had not erred in reminding her of the difference of rank between her and her patroness which was appointed by Providence, though she had erred in the attempt to usurp over her an authority which is not delegated to man, nor is ever assumed by him but to be abused. Leonore underwent a sort of revulsion of feeling, which all who have known any similar sensation can affirm to be the most painful which can be experienced, when the foundations of one's past existence of thought and feeling seem to crumble, and confidence in their stability for the future is injured to a degree we are inclined to pronounce irreparable. Leonore no longer felt secure, as she did a few hours past, that she would do or suffer all things for Nadine. She lost that loving confidence in the inward rebellion which Madame de Château * * had excited by denying her, as it were, an independent existence, striving to make her as much a part of Nadine's possessions as the couch she lay on. "I am not her slave, I, who have been her friend—who may become——" Leonore hid her burning face on her pillow, and asked herself whether the marquise and Madame de Fleury would not alike deem her presumptuous.

Day dawned before Leonore slept, and Nadine stood beside her, waiting for her to wake, grieved to see her slumber so troubled. There was a bright spot on her cheek, her raven hair hung in disorder on her neck, two or three tears found their way through her closed eyelids, her lips were parted, one word escaped them. Nadine was leaning over her; she heard it.

“Adalbert!”

The delicate tinge on Nadine's cheek deepened. She breathed more quickly. It had been a lovely picture, the waking girl bending over the sleeping one. But at that word a sudden thought flashed through the breast of the little countess, a thought of pain. She drew back trembling, pressed her hands to her heart, sank down silently and softly on a seat beside Leonore's couch, and bowed her head in deep meditation. That name—what might its import be? All the reflections of Nadine were in order to obtain an answer to that question. At length she raised her head, her countenance, though sad, beaming with heavenly sweetness. That name—Nadine bent down and kissed the lips which had pronounced it. O kiss of peace and love! it woke Leonore, and the first glance at Nadine's face

seemed to dispel all the vexation of the past evening.

"My own Leonore," said the young countess, recalling her yesterday's conversation with her friend, "still mine to do what I like with."

She smiled. Leonore started up to meet her embrace, and her heart accorded to Nadine all she had refused to the marquise.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Dans une semblable lutte un caractère ordinaire doit succomber.”—GUIZOT.

MADAME DE CHATEAU * * met Leonore in the morning without any manifestation of displeasure. She was, however prejudiced, a woman of discernment, and a little cool reflection had shown her not only how far her intense anxiety for her grandchild had carried her beyond the mark, but also encouraged her to hope, as she recalled Leonore's devotion in past years, and her present determination to return to Germany, that Nadine was likely to receive no less than she had attempted to exact. She felt that in making the demand she had sacrificed her dignity, and there would be yet further loss of it in resenting the refusal. Moreover, Leonore's high spirit was by no means uncongenial to her own, though of course the very resemblance was likely to en-

danger harmony betwixt them. She had ever liked Leonore better than she showed, and had sometimes abstained from noticing her because, prejudice apart, good sense made her think that the position which the girl was placed in was too ambiguous to be advantageous to her.

With real magnanimity the marquise spared her grandchild a knowledge of the extent to which she suffered in resigning her to other relatives, and parted from her with wonderful calmness. Nadine and Leonore partially understood and admired her motives, and a certain awe which she inspired made them, without any choice of their own, in a measure imitate her demeanour. Nadine felt acute sorrow in parting from her nearest kinswoman, one who had watched over her with the utmost care, and whose age made her an object of affectionate veneration. "But my departure is indispensable, and I will return to see her again. Yes, on that point I am quite resolved." These were Nadine's parting words to Madame de Fleury, from whom the girls separated with far more emotion than the marquise had permitted them to indulge.

Among the earliest to welcome Nadine on her return was, of course, the Countess Justine, who now resided at —, and had obtained a

small office at court, on the salary of which she existed.

"Marvellous, Leonore, is it not?" exclaimed the little countess, when the first interview with her stately relative was over. "Not a furrow more on that marble brow, and not a silver line to those tresses have five years of absence added. In general, I am the last to desire change; yet I would that age had a more mellowing effect on her. I believe she loves her son with all her heart, yet not even to speak of him melts her. Her eye sparkles with triumph; I wish it would glisten with love. She is very proud of Adalbert. Heaven forbid that she should sacrifice his real happiness to her pride!"

"Count Adalbert, too, has pride," said Leonore.

"Ah! I suppose he has, but his pride differs from hers; at least, it did. Oh, why was he not here to welcome us? How vexatious that he should be in distant quarters, probably for a long period, his mother said. He must come—he must get leave, if it be but for a day. I want to see my young cousin transformed into a cavalry officer; but it is not Adalbert transformed that I desire here; it is my own dear old playmate—happy, merry, kind as ever. His

letters are stiff and constrained, but that does not signify that his heart is changed. He always, as a boy, was miserable the moment that he took a pen between his fingers. Nothing can be less like the frankness and vivacity of his manner than his mode of writing. I cannot understand that. I lose all my shy, uncomfortable feelings when I begin a letter. Sometimes, dear Leonore, I have really felt a wish to put a friend at a little distance, that I might write rather than speak."

"Then let me go to Lichtenthal at once," said Leonore, laughing.

"O no, not you; I can speak to you; but grandmamma, I am sure she can only have found out how fond I am of her since I left her. And as to herself, how very different her letters are to her cold, stately manner; they flow freely from her heart."

"Yes, I observe the difference," remarked Leonore thoughtfully. "I believe that it is very difficult to understand people from their letters."

Leonore had perceived that, of late years, Adalbert had written more frequently and more fully to his cousin than to herself; but she felt that, until she saw him, she could not know whence this proceeded. He might have made

the same observation with regard to her. Maidenly reserve, increasing as childhood departed, had as much influence as the ambiguity of her situation in producing the change on her part.

In the course of their journey from Paris Leonore had communicated to Nadine the proposal of which she had gained Madame de Fleury's approval. The little countess listened with tolerable patience, but would not wholly submit to the thwarting of her wishes on a point which she had much at heart. She felt with Leonore that she did not desire to compromise her own or her friend's dignity by thrusting her into society where she was unwelcome. "*Nous verrons*," was almost the only reply she gave when Leonore began the subject; and after their arrival in —, when Leonore was not included in the invitations which the countess received, Nadine refrained from any allusion to the omission; but when they were extended to her *protégée*, she was too much pleased to allow Leonore to exclude herself voluntarily, and she prevailed with her friend to accompany her, though ever without the sanction of her stronger judgment. On such occasions poor Nadine seldom gained the gratification she hoped for. Leonore, if kindly received by the host and

hostess, was often allowed to pass unobserved by most of the guests, and was never recognised but as the dependent of the countess. At home and abroad the Countess Justine marked with decision her acceptance of her in this character from the first day of her return. She beheld with displeasure Leonore's beauty and calm dignity, and longed to crush her into the insignificance which she thought alone became her birth, but dared not enter on an encounter which might provoke a quarrel with Nadine, whom she especially desired to conciliate, avoiding, at the same time, from disposition and policy, the fault of servility. In fact, the Countess Justine felt herself, at this period, in need of all her caution and all her sagacity. She too, like her young companions, looked back to the green shades of Lichtenthal, when she was partly intrusted with the care of the little invalid, and provided with a welcome refuge from her own poverty. She, too, recalled the fond intimacy which had then united Nadine and Adalbert, excluding as much as she could Leonore from the group. In those days had originated the ambitious hope that her son would finally be endowed with his cousin's wealth; but she well knew that, if she betrayed such a design, a strong current of opposition would manifest

itself against her in the family councils. The dread of hastening this crisis, and certain misgivings about Leonore, of which she could not divest herself, mitigated any regret which she felt for the absence of Adalbert. Then, against these dangers, she was forced to weigh the probability of an arrangement of a suitable marriage for the young heiress before Adalbert should have had any opportunity of regaining his old influence over her heart and fancy, and the small likelihood there was of the arrival of a period when he could see Nadine apart from Leonore. The little countess also began to plan entertainments at her own house ; and the Countess Justine became very desirous that Adalbert should be present at them, and wrote to counsel him to obtain, as speedily as he could, the leave of absence which was promised to him for the ensuing month, when he would come of age, and wished to be for a season with his family. Many urgent injunctions were added to his mother's letter by Nadine. The event of her first ball was regarded with no slight anxiety by the young countess, who congratulated herself on having framed a project which she hoped would not fail to advance and to secure all her fond intentions with respect to Leonore. She had resolved to present her friend at this ball

in a costume precisely similar to her own, and to distinguish her by every token of regard.

"None can control me here," she said. "I am mistress in this *salon*. I may adorn it as I will; and I select you, Leonore, as its brightest ornament."

The girls smiled on each other, and then sighed. The one anticipated little, and therefore could scarcely sustain disappointment; the other assured herself that she hoped much, but was secretly conscious that she feared more.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on !
The night is dark, and I am far from home ;
Lead Thou me on !”

Lyra Apostolica.

It was a pretty sight, on the evening of Nadine's presentation at court, to see her at her toilette, assisted by Leonore. The generous girl's chief desire was to banish all thought of herself from the mind of her patroness and from her own. In her zeal she somewhat trespassed on Mademoiselle Hortense's office, and incurred the wrath of that high personage, who hazarded a malicious remark :

“Mademoiselle Körner always thinks she can be everything—the *femme de chambre* and the lady too. She is very clever ; but still my experience in courts must be allowed to surpass her own.”

Such shafts as Hortense let fly could not pierce Leonore. They fell harmlessly around her, and she was scarcely sensible of their discharge. Her suggestions were so manifest an improvement on the arrangements of Hortense, that Nadine's judgment, as much as her partiality, adopted them.

The little countess was ready to depart, and Hortense attended her to the top of the staircase, bearing a lamp in her hand. Through haste, or perhaps through petulance, she spilt some of the boiling oil from it on her arm; yet had the self-command, out of consideration for her young mistress, to make no exclamation. The pain was extreme, and, the countess departed, Hortense cast herself on a chair fainting. At first Leonore regarded her with astonishment, supposing this to be a fresh testimony of displeasure, more extreme than she could have expected. But the poor Frenchwoman made her sensible that it was the flesh, not the temper, that was smarting; and, all their little dissensions forgotten, Leonore was on her knees, dressing the wound, and binding it up with her softest cambric handkerchief. She next persuaded Hortense to go to bed, and sat beside her during some hours of restlessness and pain. As she saw her gradually

grow quieter she sought to calm her further, and enable her to sleep undisturbed, by promising that she would herself attend to the countess on her return.

“ Ah ! you are too good,” replied Hortense with gratitude, and a little twinge of compunction ; and Leonore pressed her hand with a smile that told her that she understood what was passing in her mind, and entertained not the slightest resentment. Hortense slept, and Leonore bowed down her head on her hands, and considered whether she might not have been happier had she never occupied a higher station near Nadine than that she had now undertaken to fill.

Poor Leonore ! since her arrival at —— she had begun to recognise how inconsistent her position was with the realisation of the cherished hopes of her young, untutored heart. Days of painful effort and suppressed emotion were often followed by nights of weeping and wakefulness. During such seasons Leonore asked herself, as now, many a spirit-probing question. “ Is there in my nature a pride and ambition that are to be laid low by the constant mortifications which beset me on every side ? ” she inquired, as she thought of Nadine now standing where she

must never enter. "I know not; but this I know, that in my heart there is more of love than either. Rank and wealth I covet not but as means. What were they to me when any but Adalbert offered them? Could I be again in the home of my parents, could Adalbert be as Karl, and Nadine my friend, O how content should I be! My lot was not of my choosing; even if the young peasant girl exulted when first drawn from her obscurity into an atmosphere of light and love, it was not her own doing. Then, if not my doing, it was the ordering of Providence. I am not the subject of a fellow-creature. Though human hands seem to shape my destiny, it is not so. The characters, the circumstances, which make or mar all my fortunes—these are but the materials with which God works. Out of evil good shall come. Faith and patience—by these must I hold fast, and the deepest waters shall not roll over my head."

Thus Leonore attained that thought of abiding consolation on which all sorrowing Christians lean—which is rendered to *us* familiar in the beautiful language of our Prayer Book, in the blessed comfort held forth in turn by our church to each of her suffering children. "Wherefore, whatsoever your sickness is, know you *cer-*

tainly that it is God's visitation." In this certainty Leonore reposed.

It was past midnight when Nadine returned, and, to her surprise, was welcomed by Leonore.

"Poor Hortense!" she exclaimed, after hearing of her misfortune. "Think of her concealing the pain which she must have felt at the time. She really loves me. Grandmamma was not wrong when she gave her to me as a treasure. And you, my own Leonore, my pearl!"

Nadine pressed her to her heart, and held her there in silence—a silence which she scarcely broke during the time they remained together, and which confessed that the evening had not passed away without the occurrence of something painful relating to her friend. Leonore retired to rest, but she did not sleep long, and the first sound she heard on waking was the bell of a church close at hand, ringing for the mass of the dawn. She rose and looked out. The morning was beautiful, the air re-invigorated her, and her spirit sprang towards heaven on the wings of prayer and praise. She determined to join the few worshippers of a lowly order whom she saw approaching the house of God. She and her young patroness had been trained by the Marquise de Château * * in the strict observance of

all the rules of their mode of faith. They rarely missed a daily attendance at mass; but, thought Leonore, "Nadine will be too fatigued to go to church before noon to-day, and I shall return, if I go now, before she or Hortense can need me." Preparing herself with haste, she crossed the Place, and reached the church. The office over, she remained a while on her knees in more individual supplication, and her troubled spirit gained peace as she prayed. As she moved away, an inscription suspended against a pillar caught her eye: "Pray for the sick." She paused to obey the injunction, in that moment remembering that the little church in which she stood was one attached to the Hospital of St. ——. Her prayer extended itself to the sick in heart, the bruised in spirit. She inadvertently issued by a different door from that by which she had entered, and, instead of being in the Place, she found herself at the entrance to one of the wards of the hospital. "For the Incurable" was written in large characters over the door.

"'Incurable!'" repeated Leonore. "'Lasciate ogni speranza, o voi ch' entrate!'" Are the inhabitants of this place supremely miserable? How many not confined here carry with them whithersoever they go wounds unhealable save

by death ! Disease hath more power to destroy this flesh than sorrow possesses, and surely they must suffer most who have health, youth, and strength waging war with their inward anguish."

Leonore had visited abodes of want and suffering in company with the marquise, but never any from which hope of remedy was thus avowedly excluded. She felt impelled by a sensation something like curiosity to examine further into the condition of those within, as well as that lively sympathy which ever drew her to the side of suffering, which had bound her to the couch of Nadine.

"Une secrète intelligence,
S'adresse-t-elle aux malheureux ?"

Certainly this spring did exist in her heart. .

Leonore raised the curtain, and stood in the midst of her afflicted fellow-creatures. At this early hour few of the beds were untenanted. The first glance around showed Leonore that the ward was made a refuge for extreme old age, as well as for incurable disease. Young, living in a luxurious abode, and though acquainted with suffering, chiefly acquainted with it under a very different aspect, Leonore sickened as she gazed, and stood still, unable for a moment to retreat or

to advance. One of the nuns who were moving to and fro approached, and courteously addressed her. Leonore looked confused. The nun repeated her words :

"Has your kindness, madame, brought you hither to visit either of these unfortunates ? Whom do you seek ?"

"No one," replied Leonore. "Your church, the name of your ward, inspired me with interest, and I entered here, perhaps with scarcely a better motive than curiosity."

"Be it so," returned the nun, in a voice so kind in its sweetness that it did not fall on Leonore's ear like the address of a stranger ; "you may still derive benefit from your casual visit to this abode. Come, I will take you round the ward. It does the young and healthy no harm to behold these sufferings occasionally."

"You spend your days here," said Leonore, in a tone of mingled pity and reverence.

"No," said the nun, "only a portion of each day."

Leonore observed that her countenance was singularly placid, her voice low and even, her complexion blooming. Health of mind and body was, then, to be enjoyed when existence was passed in this dreary abode. There was a ten-

derness and love in the good sister's looks and demeanour which forbade Leonore to attribute this to insensibility. Had the suspicion passed through her mind, it must have been wholly dissipated by the tone in which the nun inquired into the ailments of more than one of the sufferers as she passed, and by the brightening eye and wan smile which welcomed her approach whenever there was sufficient animation to recognise it. But most of those whom Leonore beheld were in the last stage of human decay, and but here and there was a face lighted up by a ray of intelligence, though some had the restlessness of pain, and others the irritability of weariness. Her heart died within her. The nun watched her expressive countenance with an inquiring eye.

"What an existence!" at length exclaimed Leonore; "the flame is out, the ashes yet smouldering. Is it possible that we shall ourselves ever be condemned to drag on life in such a condition?"

The nun laid her hand on her arm:

"My child, that will be as God pleases."

Leonore was ashamed; she cast down her eyes. "Alas!" she thought, "I am a rebel at heart. I would not have this peaceful being look

in on the wild tumult of my breast. This is an atmosphere which preaches patient endurance."

"See," said the nun, "here is one of those whom you pity so much about to be released. We must pray for the departing spirit."

She pointed to a bed beside which stood a Capuchin, the attendant of the ward. He was an old man; his cowl was thrown back, and the rays of the morning sun broke in on his venerable brow and snowy beard, and on the ghost-like creature who lay before him, just trembling into eternal life. A crucifix was placed upon her breast, and by its rise and fall alone could it be discerned that she yet breathed. On their knees around the bed were some of her companions, bound to life by a thread scarcely less fragile, her attendants, and one or two of the nuns. Leonore had obeyed her companion's injunction, and they prayed side by side.

It was over. The little crowd silently dispersed. Leonore arose, deeply affected by the solemn scene of which she had been made so unexpectedly the witness. Her calm companion saw how much she was moved, and perceived her wish to depart. She made no attempt to detain her longer, but as she drew back the curtain for her to pass she said :

"It is an act of charity to visit such of these poor creatures as are alive to the kindness. If you feel inclined to return, you can always enter. You may ask for Sister Joanna if you like."

Leonore bowed silently and passed on. When she reached her chamber the hour was still early, and she had time to commune with her own heart on the many thoughts that had been stirred within her before either the little countess or Hortense called for her attention.

"No one appeared agitated except myself," she said. "I suppose this is the effect of habit. It makes all calm. Alas! I fear it makes some callous. Perhaps it would be said that no death-bed could be less shocking than the one I have just quitted. So I thought at first, and no doubt I should have been much more moved had I witnessed a mental as well as a corporeal conflict; but yet it now appears to me that the very absence of the last renders this death more appalling than others, rather than less so. Who would like, could the veil be drawn from futurity, to see themselves stretched on such a bed? What an utter extinction of the hope of a final repentance! Oh! let me never forget that a like pall may be cast over me long ere the spirit is released from the flesh, and leave nothing to be done in an

hour which may be one, as far as the mind is concerned, of utter unconsciousness. That poor old creature's death had, in reality, occurred to her when reason failed, and responsibility ceased. It was then that the tree fell, and the little vitality which still animated her was but as the green leaves which the rootless trunk continues to put forth as long as any sap remains in it. If she was not prepared for death then, when, O when, did she make herself ready? If her lamp was not burning then, what power has she had since of going out to buy oil for it? Utter darkness overtook her, and to-day the Bridegroom's call hath roused her from her sleep. Is it usually true, as it is usually thought and felt to be, that the death of the aged is much less shocking than that of the young? What does this mean? That it is less awful to go to judgment with the accumulated account of seventy years on one's head than the brief one of seventeen? Yet how much more is the latter pitied than the former! How many more tears are shed for the innocent child than for the worldly old man! Ah! how do such feelings as these betray our absence of faith, our refusal to realise the things unseen, our blind devotion to those which are seen! As soon as life becomes inadequate for the purposes of

earth we esteem it valueless. Doubtless, then, we hold it as an end, not as a means. And this is the sin of which the young are guilty when, in the first hour of disappointment and anguish, they wildly cry, 'Why must I live on? Why may I not find peace in death?' They thus acknowledge that they never regarded life as the means of discipline, the preliminary task, but as the season of earthly happiness."

Leonore buried her face in her hands, and thought deeply, and with her reflections were mingled the self-distrustful prayers which alone endue the resolutions of such seasons with efficacy. "Let it not be so with me," she said, as she looked up again. "Let me bear all things with patient hope, and let me recognise that the sole importance of the events of earth lies in the lesson which they teach."

CHAPTER IX.

“The world’s a room of sickness, where each heart
Knows its own anguish and unrest :
The truest wisdom there, and noblest art,
Is his who skills of comfort best.”

Christian Year.

LEONORE’S thoughts often recurred to the morning during the course of the day, and though much more serious, she was much less sad. In fact, it was greatly for her good to have been taken out of herself ; and the emotions which she had undergone were all healthy, and tended not to enfeeble but to strengthen her. She had stepped from artificial life, which made her suffer torture by its chilling conventionalities and its galling chains, into a region of comparative truth, where the real purposes of our existence appeared to be recognised and steadily pursued ; where those principles and convictions which all Christians profess constituted the rule of life, while,

mixing in the world, they seem to be forgotten and laid aside for a multitude of petty motives and laws which are permitted to regulate our conduct. When "trifles make the sum of human things" we are apt to think their course may run on without the exertion of religious principle and thought. We comply with custom in what we call indifferent points, and tell our conscience that there is no right or wrong in them. There are many more triflers than trifles in this world. All might, and all ought, if they value seriousness of mind, and desire to realise those momentous truths on which their well-being depends, to comprehend within their sphere of existence much that none could term trifling. The sufferings which poverty daily inflicts, the ravages which disease daily commits, the pangs which grief daily causes, are not trifles: these are within the reach of all, and are sufficient to steady the most volatile, to touch the most selfish, to startle the most unconcerned.

Leonore was especially blessed when her feet were led to the abodes where dwell these eloquent, these all-resistless preachers of truth. Her observations, of course, were superficial; but they were such as forcibly appealed to her heart and imagination, and furnished both with far

more wholesome food than any on which they had lately fed. The hospital itself was the work of charity, given to the "poor in Christ" for His sake. In the nuns who attended it, it was easy to recognise the servants of Him who "went about doing good." The little church was always open to such of the sick as could crawl to the altar's foot. Within its walls was the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise, and a humble request was proffered for the intercessions of those who entered it, who, if they had no other offering to give the poor sufferers, could at least yield this, and trust that, if it were their all, it would be as acceptable as was the widow's mite. All these things seemed not to be mistaken. The imperfections which pervaded this, as every human system, marring more or less our best efforts, had not met Leonore's eye, and found no place in her thoughts. She desired to return to the spot. Yet a feeling of shame, springing from a fear of proving of no service there, held her back.

"But Sister Joanna told me I could be useful. She bade me come; I will go to her. I will tell her how glad I should be to do anything she would point out. I feel that it must make me better, and oh! far happier to be thus employed. Even if I do little for others, the benefit which

will result to myself is not to be neglected. How much I need self-discipline! What lessons of patience will those beds of pain teach! How must conscience reproach me with ingratitude when I compare my lot with that of the miserable inmates of those walls! Yes, I will return to them."

The next morning saw the execution of Leonore's design. On quitting the church she entered the same ward as on the previous day, and walked up it, looking from side to side for the good nun, whom she failed to discover. A girl stepped forward, and asked her with a smile of recognition if she sought Sister Joanna.

"Yes," replied Leonore with surprise, not considering that her former appearance was little likely to have been unobserved or forgotten in that monotonous abode.

"She has not entered on guard yet," said the girl, looking at the clock. "In five minutes she will be here, and she will come to me. Here is a seat by my bed: will you wait here?"

Leonore accepted her invitation. There was a native grace in the girl's manner of accosting her of which she was immediately sensible, and there was an appearance of youth about her which at once shocked and surprised Leonore. A

ticket suspended over her little bed bore the inscription : " Wilhelmine Bürger, aged twenty."

" You are very young," Leonore exclaimed involuntarily, in a tone of the utmost pity.

" The youngest in the ward," replied Wilhelmine.

" Have you been here long ?"

" O yes—very long ! I came when I was fourteen, and at Christmas I shall be twenty-one. I was born on Christmas morning, just when Christ was born, and, like Him, to live a life of pain and poverty."

Leonore could not speak, but her glistening eyes told the girl how much she felt for her far better than words could have done.

" Have you friends ?" at length she asked.

" None but Sister Joanna. She has always been my friend. I am an orphan. I have a brother, who comes to see me sometimes, otherwise I see no one."

" Would you like to see any one ?" asked Leonore timidly.

" Certainly I should," replied the girl with animation. " How can I like to lie here day and night by myself, with no one to speak to ? I cannot sleep or rest. In the morning I get up with the light, if I can quit my bed, which is not

often. I sit in my chair, in hopes of gaining more ease than on this mattress. They find me fainting, and put me into my bed again. It is always the same. There is no hope for any of us here. We are incurable!"

Her head sunk on her breast in extreme dejection, her large black eyes slowly filling with tears. Suddenly looking up, she continued:

"We have a doctor who comes to see us twice a day. He is no great professor, but he does not need to be one here. He has but to say, 'Patience, patience,' and that we can say to ourselves."

She laughed, and there was something in the sound of that ringing laugh of youth which pierced Leonore's heart even more than the sight of her tears. In Wilhelmine's speech and countenance were a vivacity and an intelligence which painfully and strangely contrasted with the almost total lack of animation around her.

"Ah! surely you are too young to be without hope!" exclaimed Leonore.

The girl shook her head with utter despondency.

"No, no; I can never be otherwise than I am. I fell down stairs, and I have injured my spine so that I can never recover. All the

doctors in —— have seen me. Oh, if you knew what I have suffered! I bid them now not to martyrise me any more, but to leave me to lie here till it pleases God to take me. Sometimes I think that cannot be long; but then, as you say, I am so young—you said too young to be without hope; it is precisely therefore that I have not even the hope of a speedy release. Ah! here is Sister Joanna. She has just entered from the convent. She is coming this way."

And Wilhelmine beckoned impatiently with her little white hand to hasten the good nun's movements.

The sweet smile on Sister Joanna's face told Leonore that she had done well to come. She extended her hand and said:

"I am glad to see you with Wilhelmine. She is young, and it is good for her to see the young. There is little to cheer the poor girl here, but we do what we can for her, and outside these walls she would be destitute and friendless."

"I will come to see her whenever she likes," returned Leonore eagerly. "If you think it will be good for her, I am sure it will be good for me. Shall I return, Wilhelmine?"

"O yes!" replied the girl, with a look of

some surprise. "Pray come; it will make me much happier."

Elated with this declaration, Leonore quitted the hospital. "I shall make her much happier." As she was repeating these words to herself there passed a lady of rank and her daughter on their way to the church, whom Leonore knew to be among her most decided opponents; in fact, to their house the Countess Justine had taken Nadine the preceding evening without her. Leonore felt sure that they saw her, though they refused the smallest token of recognition. The haughtiness of their demeanour recalled to her mind an anecdote which she had heard Madame de Fleury tell, of the vehemence with which certain noble ladies disputed the privilege during the Holy Week of washing the feet of twelve poor men. One of them repulsed another, declaring that her pedigree was by no means long enough to permit her to be enrolled of the number. As the remembrance of this incongruous pride flashed across Leonore's mind a smile of scorn lit up her face, but she detected and contemned the emotion which brought it there. "Is there no pride in my contempt?" she asked. "Sister Joanna, would she not weep rather than laugh were she to perceive such

inconsistencies in those who rank themselves among the followers of Jesus?" Abashed at her own failure in true humility, Leonore moved with a less stately step and an eye fixed on the ground. "Yet," she exclaimed inwardly, after a few moments' musing, "I do not believe that if I were high-born I should trample on the lowly. The lowly—no; but if I deemed any presumptuous, how should I conduct myself towards them? The only means I possess of judging is by observing carefully how I feel, how I behave, to my kinsmen at Lichtenthal." Here broke in, softening the recollection of the half-servile, half-tyrannical intendant and his wife, one of the few thoughts that Leonore gave to Karl.

On entering Leonore went straight to Nadine's couch, and leaning over it, gazed fondly on the pale face of the sleeper. The little countess opened her eyes languidly, fixing them on Leonore, who was about to withdraw and leave her to further repose.

"Don't go away," said Nadine, stretching out her hand, "though I am very tired."

The sight of Leonore seemed to revive her, and after a moment she exclaimed, with a sudden burst of animation:

"How fresh you look, all radiant with

morning beauty! Where have you been? What has made you so happy?"

Leonore bent down, and kissed Nadine's brow; then rising, she folded her hands on her bosom, and stood before her friend with the air of one at once humble and elated.

"I too," she said, "I too have been at the court of a great King, where a kindly greeting met me, and a bidding to return. There the meanest place may well content the highest of His subjects; there the joy of their hearts must be to render any service, however small, to the Master they adore."

"Where have you been, Leonore?" repeated Nadine, raising herself on her arm.

"To yonder hospital. You can see it from your window." And Leonore told the history of the last two mornings, even to the cold passing by of the princess and her daughter. "But you see," she ended, smiling, "there is one court from which they cannot exclude me, nor would they wish it."

Nadine drew her gently towards her, and whispered, as she embraced her, "One place, dearest, where we may hope to dwell together in peace."

From that day the intercourse between

Leonore and Wilhelmine was frequent, and became more interesting, more necessary to each, for they soon perceived that there existed between them that intimate sympathy which inspires a desire of interchange of thought and feeling, and alone constitutes friendship; which can bind all ranks, all ages together, and even the cultivated mind and the soaring genius to the intellect which is uninstructed, and by nature weak. In the present instance Leonore soon discovered that she had met with a very uncommon character, which she must study long ere she could become acquainted with half its peculiarities. She found that her task had been easier when she tended the little countess than it was when she tried to soothe Wilhelmine. Strange that the child whom, in all but health, fortune had favoured, should be more submissive in spirit than this poor orphan, who had bowed to an adverse fate all her life. Nadine, by natural constitution, as well as by the gracious influences of religion, possessed that patience which no suffering will change into irritability. All her desires were anticipated and gratified as far as possible, and when the endeavour failed she never forgot to show gratitude for the kind intention. Poor Wilhelmine, until Leonore

came to her, had wished in secret and in vain; and now, when she told her passing fancies to one whom affection urged to accomplish them, she had the bitter disappointment of discovering that the ease or the pleasure which she looked to obtain, if tasted at all, was very evanescent. The food she had desired she soon rejected; the occupation she had eagerly begun she was constrained to lay aside; and after these failures she would appear more sad than while she had been deluded by the belief that she could have derived enjoyment from sources closed to her. Falling ill at so early an age, and born in a lowly station, Wilhelmine had received little education. She could read, but to do so was an exertion which she could only make at intervals, and never continue long. But she did not like Leonore to read to her. "I can turn over my books when I am by myself," she said. Leonore brought her some which she had selected carefully. They were simple tales in her own rank of life, the familiar incidents of which she thought might engage her interest, distract her thoughts from herself, and enlarge the sphere within which her memory and imagination were bound. Wilhelmine turned them over distastefully, and then gave them all back to her.

“Will you not read any of them?”

Wilhelmine shook her head. Then, perceiving Leonore’s look of disappointment, she added in explanation :

“No, no ; these are not good for me. I was brought here before I knew anything of the world, and I do not wish to become acquainted with it now. I am shut out from it for ever, and it is well for me to be in ignorance.”

On reflection Leonore abstained from combating this impression. She felt that the amusement she had proposed was not without its danger ; it might stir up feelings never yet aroused, and cause repinings now unknown. She stooped to pick up one of the books which had fallen, and in closing it her eye fell on the description of a walk on a lovely morning in spring, and the sensations which all its delicious sights and sounds awoke in the breast of a happy child. She sighed and said :

“Perhaps you are right, Wilhelmine ; I will try to choose better.”

“Bring me the lives of holy persons who have had a heavy cross ; who have denied themselves for Christ, and suffered in the flesh here in hopes of peace and joy hereafter. As to these, they may be good. Take them to the

other ward, and give them to those who expect soon to rise from their bed of sickness, and to go forth again."

Leonore did as she suggested, and Wilhelmine was much pleased to see herself obeyed. Leonore felt it strange that while beside the couch of Nadine, her superior in rank and her patroness, hers had been the tone of decision, and to her the invalid appealed; while with Wilhelmine she was often overruled by the energetic dictates and prompt biddings of the excitable little being, whose activity of mind and keen susceptibility seemed unimpaired by suffering. The system in which Leonore had been educated did not instigate, even if it would have permitted her, to bring Wilhelmine the purest of all food, the most efficacious of all medicine, the volume of the Holy Scriptures, which we, in what has been so familiarly called "the land of Bibles," are accustomed to see at the head of every bed in the wards of our hospitals. Nor was Leonore to be blamed that, in the selection she made in accordance with Wilhelmine's last injunction, there was not a little that was even injurious to one whose fancy was overwrought, and that, in all probability, would have diminished to her the interest of those Gospel

narratives which we daily read in their awful simplicity. There were seasons in which Wilhelmine lay in a state almost of insensibility, and her hollow voice and rolling eye could only give feeble indications of her consciousness of Leonore's presence, and of the satisfaction she derived from it. One day Leonore exclaimed with tears :

"Would that I could do anything for you, Wilhelmine !"

The girl caught her hand, and replied, as she pressed it to her lips :

"Love me as Sister Joanna does."

On Wilhelmine's first entrance into the hospital she underwent a sickness which nearly deprived her of life. Sister Joanna, during the thirty days which she nursed her without quitting her side save for indispensable rest, had conceived that strong affection for her which Wilhelmine returned with characteristic ardour, and from which she derived so much solace during the dreary years of her captivity.

CHAPTER X.

“Ye pains that shake this shed of clay,
Stern searchers of decay,
Full welcome are the thoughts ye bring,
To seek a sheltering wing,
Until be past life’s tyranny,
And of a frame from suffering free,
Whose cradle is the grave.”

Thoughts in Past Years.

NADINE recognised the healthful influence on her friend’s mind of her new source of interest and occupation, and accompanied her frequently in her visits to the hospital. The countess’s purse was ever open for the relief of all those wants which are within the reach of such means, and her liberality was always most readily exerted in behalf of any whom Sister Joanna pointed out to her. Wilhelmine was charmed with the little countess ; her gentleness, the simplicity of her manner, and her love for Leonore all delighted her ; and Sister Joanna was

scarcely less won. They often talked together of their two visitors, so kind, so generous, so constant, but in all other respects so different. Nadine would sometimes relate to Wilhelmine the history of her own tedious illness.

"Suffering has made me feel for suffering," she said. "Leonore's heart needed no such teaching. She has never known a day's sickness; yet who can better guess every want, real or fancied, of the sick? Who can tend, who can bear with them better than she can?"

While Nadine spoke Leonore felt Wilhelmine's dark eyes fixed on her with an intense gaze, that seemed as if it would pierce into the inmost recesses of her heart, and inquire whether it had never bled for itself as well as for others. She could not bear the scrutiny, and moved hastily away.

"See, Nadine, what lovely flowers are arrived from Schloss Lichtenthal," cried Leonore, on the morning of the countess's ball. "Give me some of them for Wilhelmine. I think they will please her."

"Here! take these roses and this heliotrope. Take the sweetest and the best," returned Nadine, "and if she likes them we can often send her more."

Leonore hastened with her bouquet to the side of Wilhelmine's bed, and laid it there. It was a touching sight to watch her pass her slender white fingers through the flowers, now selecting one and now another to praise for its beauty or its perfume. But it was not the rarest or the loveliest that she seemed chiefly to value, but, on the contrary, she chose and laid apart from the rest those which are met with most commonly. They had bloomed in the garden of her childhood, and the tone in which she spoke thrilled through Leonore's bosom when she said :

"I was born in the midst of flowers ! Ah ! you have never been to the village of ——. You do not know how sweet is its air, how bright its blossoms. You remember that our sovereign has a Schloss and a beautiful garden there, and my father was one of the gardeners employed in it."

While she was speaking a group of country-women came up the ward, for it was market-day, and in their clean kerchiefs and bright-coloured gowns they had thronged in from the neighbouring villages.

"Ah !" cried Wilhelmine, "that is how they dress in my country ; and see, they have bunches

of flowers like these in their hands. Tell me, maiden," she continued, beckoning to a beautiful girl of eighteen or nineteen years of age, "dost thou come from ——?"

"Yes," replied the girl; and the party, attracted by the question, gathered round Wilhelmine's bed.

"Whom dost thou come to see? Whom art thou looking for?" she asked eagerly.

"Madeline Rock," was the answer.

Wilhelmine looked disappointed.

"But some among you must remember my father and mother. Christian Bürger was gardener at the Schloss. I am his little daughter, Wilhelmine. My brother still dwells among you. And thou, maiden, how art thou called?"

"I am Catherine Welner."

"I thought so, I knew it. Then we have played together many times beneath the linden trees by the church. Thou canst not have forgotten?"

"Yes," replied the girl, with confusion. "I was so young then."

Wilhelmine poured forth a torrent of inquiries for one person after another, and those she interrogated afforded her as much satisfaction as they could by their replies, but it was evident

that she had not lived in their memories. Harassed and fatigued, she sank back on her pillow, and the women passed on. She cast one look after the blooming girl, fresh as the morning of May day.

"We were children together, and look upon us now. See how different!"

She turned away her face, and concealed it. Leonore was touched to the very quick; she bent down her head on the pillow beside her, and said in a voice choked with emotion:

"Very different. But do not, dear Wilhelmine, do not judge by outward appearances. That girl looks beautiful, and healthy, and happy; but she may be all these things, and yet not be an object of envy. Who knows whether she has laid to heart those truths which, on your bed of pain, are your consolation and hope? Who knows how soon her fortunes may change, and she too may enter the school of adversity? There are many, Wilhelmine, whose lot may appear even more enviable than hers, who are indeed scarcely less pitiable than yourself."

Leonore at that moment felt that it would afford her the utmost relief to exclaim: "You know not how unhappy a creature is beside you now, with heart-sickness as incurable as the

maladies of your body—without hope, without hope !” A generous averseness to afflict the poor girl by revealing her own sufferings checked her ; but the deep earnestness with which she had spoken had half betrayed her secret. Wilhelmine raised herself, and, taking her hand, said in a low voice :

“ Sometimes I do not feel sure that you are happy.”

Leonore had regained the lofty composure peculiar to her when she herself was the theme of the words or thoughts of others. She answered with calm seriousness :

“ We have all our cross. At times we all find it heavy, and faint beneath the burden. Then Christ gently raises us, and bears it for us and with us. He upholds our steps, and enables us to move onward, slowly perhaps, and feebly, but ever onward.”

“ But why are you not happy ?” asked Wilhelmine, almost angrily.

“ Why are you not healthy ?” returned Leonore, with gentle rebuke. “ I experience trials and sorrows which cannot come within these walls. Chained to this couch, thou hast been proved and chastened. Both, both, I trust, have been thus made to recognise that peace and joy are not of

earth, and to raise their thoughts and hearts to heaven. Wilhelmine, you have learned better things than to believe that affliction is sent in wrath, and not in mercy."

"And the little countess, so fair, so delicate, so gentle, is she happy, do you think?"

"I hope so. If any human being might be trusted with happiness it would be she. She would never forget her God or her fellow-creatures in it. But I have often told you how full of suffering was her childhood, and now she must take her share in the common trials of life; and, above all, she is one who suffers with those she sees suffer."

"Ah, yes! I saw that in her face. That is like Sister Joanna; she also has too much sensibility. When I am unhappy I try to conceal it from her, that she may not afflict herself. I will not let a tear fall, but I suffer more for this constraint. Ah, yes! grief is worse when pressed inward. I feel it more here!" Wilhelmine placed her hand on her heart. She continued: "But if Sister Joanna is sick or sorrowful, then is it my turn to be afflicted. If she is ill enough to stay in her bed I crawl from mine, however weak I may be, and go to her cell ten times a day to ask how she is. It is not

possible to tell you how much we love each other."

"Such love is not often met with in the world beyond these walls, Wilhelmine."

"I believe it. No, I do not sigh for the world. I can be thankful that I am shut out from it, from all its temptations, from all its idle pleasures, its sins, its follies, and its falsehoods. These creep in here even; and oh! if I find space here to offend so many times a day as I do in thought, word, and deed, what should I have done had I lived in the world?"

She spoke with an earnestness that left no doubt of her truth and deep conviction. But to have doubted Wilhelmine's truth after a brief acquaintance with her would have shown very little power of reading character. Her principles were far too pure to allow her to frame a falsehood, but also her independent and vehement spirit utterly indisposed her to do so. She loved to give utterance to every thought or feeling in all its entireness and strength, without pause, without modification: as it sprang up in her heart it passed her lips, to be examined, pondered over afterwards, often condemned, and if so, bitterly regretted. Ah, Wilhelmine, what an impetuous spirit did Nature give thee! So

many years chained down on a bed of pain ; so many years a weary captive, forced in every circumstance to conform to rules made by others ; passing every day in blank monotony, and still so unbroken ; like the caged bird, guarded for a long period, but escaping the first moment that the door is left carelessly ajar, and skimming through the air to its native woods, as if it had never known any other life ; or like the wild deer which we see in confinement, and read in every restless glance of its eye, in the bound which only strikes its tender limbs against its bars, that it is imprisoned, not tamed !

Submission and meekness were not inherent qualities in Wilhelmine's disposition, though discipline had taught her something of both, but the power of loving, and intensity of devotion to the object beloved, were ; and this was the sole blessedness of the girl's painful existence, that it was her God who filled the first place in her heart, and that, beside Him,

“She nothing loved save what she loved in Him.”

Him she worshipped with a fervour rarely burning on the altar of the human heart. On Him her thoughts and affections spent themselves. At the foot of His cross, willing to

embrace it because it was His, she loved to kneel. The long periods she passed in the church were seen to aggravate her bodily pain, but none felt disposed to dissuade her from the exertion, because all were convinced that these hours were, in spite of what they cost her, the happiest of her being. In the long watches of the night she meditated on the heaven which is heaven because God is there. She regarded with abhorrence and dismay every shortcoming with which conscience upbraided her, because she knew that the result of sin is separation from Him. Each thought, each word was scrutinised in a manner which those who live in a course of action cannot compass, and scruples harassed her which to others seemed visionary. At times she trembled at the temerity of her hope, at times she lamented the despondency which bordered on despair; the former might be grievous self-deception—a dream from which she must wake in all the misery of perdition; the latter might be weakness of faith—distrust of Him who is all-powerful to save. These mental alternations Wilhelmine would at times describe to Leonore with a rapidity and accuracy of expression which amazed her in one whose untutored mind had received no cultiva-

tion save that of its own earnest thoughtfulness, and with a vehemence of emotion which moved her to the liveliest pity, and induced her to apply every soothing, peace-giving argument which instruction and experience (which was beginning to be Leonore's teacher) afforded her. Most unhappily in Wilhelmine's mind there were added to the legitimate sources of awe which impel the Christian to work out his salvation in trembling, those fears which the terrible fiction of purgatory inspires ; and to these Leonore, misinstructed as herself, could bring no adequate relief. Alas that the hand of man should have infused a drop so bitter into a cup full almost to overflowing !

CHAPTER XI.

“High-wrought hope
Departing, left the spirit palled and blank.”
Don Roderic.

“DEAREST Leonore, how beautiful you look!” exclaimed Nadine as Leonore Körner stood before her, attired in an elegant *costume de bal*, the same as that which the young countess herself wore. “What is it that makes you appear more brilliant, more commanding than I ever yet saw you?”

“The feeling that many are wishing to trample on me,” was the spontaneous reply that sprung to Leonore’s lip, but she repressed it, rebuking herself for its bitterness.

“Ah, Nadine!” she said, after a moment’s silence, “I much doubt the wisdom, the propriety of the consent you have won from me to-night. I ought not, indeed I ought not, to be dressed like you. I anticipate the animad-

versions I shall call down on myself. There are so many who rejoice to blame."

"But in Paris we often dressed alike," answered Nadine, in a tone of deprecation.

"I know we did; but we were very differently situated there, and this occasion is so different."

"All my pleasure in this evening would have been destroyed had you refused, and indeed this is not unwise; I had my reasons for my request."

"No doubt," said Leonore, shaking her head and smiling, "and I had not resolution enough to disappoint you; yet had it been better for both of us if I had done so. Now hear my request, dearest Nadine, and grant it. Put on your diamonds. Then at once the distinction which ought to exist is made, and I can stand at your side without undue assumption."

"Yes, and my whole design is defeated."

"I feel that if you will not comply I cannot enter the ball-room. I must retract a consent which was a grievous error," continued Leonore earnestly.

"But you will not do so if I yield to your wish?" cried Nadine in alarm.

"No, certainly not."

"Well, then, I will wear these weighty diamonds, and have a headache, I know. Are

you quite sure, Leonore, that you will have a heart ache if I refuse?"

"Quite sure, and you must accustom yourself to their weight, dearest. You cannot go to court without them."

Nadine sighed: "Don't call Hortense. You shall fasten them for me;" and she placed in Leonore's hand a splendid circlet of jewels which she took from a casket. Leonore complied, and when she had performed her task she looked at Nadine with much satisfaction. She saw that the diamonds at once redeemed the person of the pretty little countess from the charge of insignificance, which term might at other times be easily applied to it. Nadine glanced at herself in the mirror, and then at her friend.

"You do not need jewels," she said, in a tone of admiration.

"Dame Fortune never means me to have any, I suppose," replied Leonore, laughing.

"Leonore will undoubtedly be the most beautiful woman in the room; they will find it impossible to deny that," thought Nadine, as, taking Leonore's arm, she descended to the magnificent *salon* in which the ball was to take place.

Certainly no one who had gazed for the first

time on Leonore Körner's majestic figure and beautiful countenance, and on the Countess Nadine's diminutive form, and sweet, timid face, could have guessed that the latter, as the patroness of her intendant's kinswoman, was engaged in an anxious attempt to obtain the admission of the former into one of the most aristocratic and exclusive circles in Europe. It was difficult to believe that plebeian blood flowed in Leonore's veins. Nature had stamped her form with nobility. The classic outline of her features was shown to advantage by the manner in which one of the most celebrated sculptors of the day had taught her to divide her waving tresses, and, gathering them together at the back of her head, again to pass them round it in one large jetty coil, giving it the form of that of Juno, which was in perfect harmony with her commanding brow, and the whole character of her countenance. With what speechless admiration had she been gazed on when she thus appeared in the *tableaux vivants* which were the favourite amusement of her Parisian friend, Madame de Fleury! Her cheek, which had sometimes the fault of excessive paleness, now glowed with a carnation tint of brilliant hue. A secret lurked in Leonore's breast, which made

her feel as if the earthly happiness of her future life depended on the success of that evening.

The guests of the Countess Nadine were not arrived ; Madame Von Lichtenthal alone was present in the *salon*.

"I hope, dear cousin, that you will admire these dresses," said Nadine, approaching her. "Your taste is so exquisite that we cannot dispense with your approbation."

"You have it, *ma chère*," replied Madame Von Lichtenthal, never happier than when thus appealed to ; and, raising her eye-glass, she examined the countess from head to foot very carefully. "White, with green flowers—I like that. It looks simple and refreshing, and the materials are all faultless." She cast rather an envious look on the circlet of diamonds, which so far surpassed her own, and then turned with negligent indifference to Leonore. She started in surprise, and said coldly : "Mademoiselle Körner, I see your dress is nearly the same as the countess's. I suppose you made it from my cousin's after the milliner sent it home. It really does credit to your Paris education."

"No, indeed," cried Nadine, laughing ; "now your praise is misplaced, and Palmyre would never forgive you for supposing that any but

herself could produce such a *résultat*. The dresses arrived last night. They are precisely the same, and I ordered them expressly for this occasion."

Madame Von Lichtenthal raised her shoulders, and her countenance betokened some further comment, which was checked by the arrival of numerous guests, to whom it was her duty to present her cousin, in order that they might welcome her entrance into their sphere. Their receptions of the young heiress varied according to the motives which brought them around her. Many had sons and nephews whom they wished to see suitors for her hand. Many desired that her wealth might render her house their gayest resort during the season. Some received her with kindness and courtesy because they were habitually kind and courteous, or because her youth and her gentleness interested them. For one reason or another all smiled on her, but she could not but perceive that very few extended their smiles to Leonore.

"How different is this reception from that she met with in Paris! She must feel their coldness, but she has the same calm dignity when surrounded by admirers and when treated with marked neglect," thought Nadine. It

was not that Leonore's beauty could be disputed or unobserved. "Who is she?" was asked by every one who did not know the fatal answer to the question, and eagerly replied to by all who did. Later in the evening Nadine still perceived with annoyance that though Leonore had around her many foreigners of distinction, she was still sedulously avoided by those whose recognition it was all-important to obtain. Nadine felt her spirits exhausted. She wished the ball over. She looked round to see if she could retire for a while from a scene which now afforded her only fatigue and vexation. As she did so she perceived a stranger whom she had not seen before, and who was evidently in search of her.

"Can it be? Yes, it is," she exclaimed, as he reached her side, with a smile of unfeigned pleasure. "Adalbert, you here! Is it possible? I was so disappointed by your letter; I am so delighted to see yourself."

"My dearest cousin," replied Adalbert in a voice of affection, "I knew you instantly. How pleasant to find my own little Nadine again! The only respect in which you are changed is, that now you look as in the days of your suffering one was always wishing to see you

look. I would not for the world have had you alter in aught else from your own little fairy self."

"And Leonore, have you seen her?"

"Yes—at a distance only," said Adalbert, hesitatingly.

"And what do you think of her?"

"Her beauty is unchanged in character, but in degree it surpasses my expectations."

Nadine's eyes beamed with pleasure.

"You say well, Adalbert."

"You love her as much as ever?"

"More, more every day; she deserves it. But come, let us seek her. You would not surely lose any time in exchanging a greeting with the companion of our happy days at Lichenthal. Come."

"But I saw that Leonore was dancing."

"Oh! is she? Then let us wait for her in this conservatory," said Nadine, leading the way to a seat overshadowed by flowers and plants, behind whose luxuriant leaves her slight form was completely hidden. Adalbert placed himself beside her. At that moment two English ladies entered the conservatory, and either believing themselves to be alone, or feeling secure that their language was not understood, they con-

tinued their conversation without reserve. It happened that Nadine was perfectly conversant with the English tongue, and her attention was irresistibly arrested when she heard one of them say :

“How beautiful that intendant’s cousin is ! Who could suppose her of such mean birth ? There is not a woman in the room who would grace rank better. It is quite a pity she cannot change places with the little countess, who looks very insignificant, and so sweet-tempered that she would scarcely be mortified by doing so, while, if I am not mistaken, the dark-eyed beauty would be greatly gratified by the reform.”

The speaker looked clever and satirical ; the other lady replied in a softer voice :

“Poor thing ! I really feel for her—her position is so false.”

“Yes, and no doubt her patroness expects the poor girl to be very grateful for the piece of self-indulgent folly that has placed her in it. I dare say no one has considered what is to become of her, or how a life just beginning is to be spent. The thoughtlessness of these great people is unpardonable. I myself knew a young girl thus brought into the drawing-room, and

literally sent back into the kitchen. One hears that the children of West Indian planters are sometimes allowed to have little black slaves to play with, and that they stick pins into them to see the red blood come, and we European parents are mightily shocked, while we bring up our own children in many habits of disregard of the feelings of the lower classes not a whit less barbarous."

"I am sorry," said her gentler companion, "to think that there is truth in what you say, but in the present instance you overlook a circumstance which strikes me much. What do you say to a girl of eighteen taking pleasure in bringing forward one so far outshining her in beauty, and inviting the comparison by similarity of dress?"

"Oh, nonsense, sickly nonsense! The diamonds round the Countess Nadine's head insure her a thousand more followers than that girl's beauty can gain, and prevent her vanity from encountering the slightest mortification. Nay, her very conduct affords grounds for delicate compliments, such as you have just uttered. Not that I would condemn the countess unknown. I blame her instructors, her guardians. She may be making a very sincere, though very

injudicious attempt to render her *protégée* happy. Alas! when she discovers her error it will be too late to rectify it."

"Too late!" murmured Nadine, whose ears the greater part of this discourse had reached. She turned so pale that Adalbert thought she was fainting.

"Thou art ill. I will fetch Leonore," he cried in alarm.

"No, no," said Nadine, detaining him. "I am not ill; I will come with thee, only give me a little time. Don't bring Leonore. I can't tell her what is the matter with me. Did you understand what they said?"

"No, indeed," replied Adalbert, in astonishment.

"Oh, that cruel woman! Let me weep a while, dear Adalbert, and then I shall be better."

Adalbert tried in vain to persuade his cousin to tell him what she had heard, and why she wept. She resolutely refused. For many reasons she rejoiced that he had not understood. Resuming her composure, she said:

"Let us seek Leonore. I am sure she must have done dancing."

In a few moments they were at her side.

But embarrassment pervaded the manner of both Adalbert and Leonore to a degree which prevented that cordiality which it would have given Nadine pleasure to behold. Her hand was claimed by her cousin for the dance which was commencing, and then the ball was over.

CHAPTER XII.

"Having small hope, sometimes I did despair ;
Sometimes too much built castles in the air."

GEORGE WITHER.

"Dans le sein du possible en songe elle s'élance."

LAMARTINE.

"It really was a delightful surprise to see Adalbert last night, after the long letter which he wrote to explain all the causes why he could not possibly appear at my ball, was it not?" said Nadine to the Countess Justine the following morning, as they sat in her favourite little boudoir, discussing the events of the past important evening, and concurring in the opinion that its success had been complete. Leonore also was present, but she had placed herself with her embroidery frame at as great a distance from the two ladies as so small an apartment would allow, and bent over it,

"Pale, mute, and mournfully sedate."

Nadine, too, looked absent. Was this merely the usual penalty of *ennui*, which a scene of brilliancy and excitement fails not to exact?

"Adalbert is a great favourite at court, Nadine," remarked Madame Von Lichtenthal; "he is so handsome, so spirited, so full of life and courage. All the young princes delight in him, and his Majesty himself has bestowed peculiar favour on him. He obtained his commission much earlier than we expected, which was a great point to him, for thou knowest his income was narrow enough. He has nothing to do now but to form a suitable alliance, and his fortune is secure."

Madame Von Lichtenthal directed her eyes towards Leonore, who gave no signs of interest in the conversation.

"Poor Adalbert!" exclaimed Nadine earnestly; "I hope he will never sacrifice himself, as I see some of his companions do, nor offer his hand without his heart to the wealthiest heiress of the empire. But if he has retained the candour, the generous spirit of his boyhood, he never can do so."

"As to his heart, my dear, that he has bestowed so many times since first he entered the Pagerie, (he was always romantic, thou knowest well), that

really I cannot tell whether it be now in his own possession or not. As to his hand, I am satisfied that he has too proper a sense of what is owing to the antiquity of our race to offer that to the mistress of millions, were her blood less pure than his own. I shall have no new-made Christian with Jewess written in every line of her handsome face, and betrayed in every glance of her black eye, like the Baronne L——, for my daughter-in-law. No; Adalbert's bride will be as noble as himself, though she must not be as penniless."

The Countess Justine flattered herself that the extreme frankness of language and tone which she had adopted would quite convince both the young ladies who heard her that she was perfectly free from any designs on the wealth of her cousin, and felt no dread of Leonore's charms. At that moment there was a gentle tap for admission at the door of the boudoir.

"Ah! that is Adalbert. Come in," cried Nadine.

It was the young count, whom his cousin received with the same glad affection with which she had met him on the preceding evening, with which she had always met him when they were children together. And Leonore also now ap-

peared clearly to remember those days, and whatever thought or sensation had chilled her manner on first seeing him wholly yielded to such recollections. She left the work which hitherto had seemed to engross her completely, and came towards him with nearly as much cordiality, and quite as much freedom from embarrassment, as Nadine. She bid him mark the perfect recovery of health which, animated by delight, Nadine's every look and movement declared. When the little countess recurred to the days passed at Lichtenthal the memory of Leonore furnished a thousand records of them. When Nadine tried to give her cousin a description of their Parisian life, Leonore added many a lively touch. At all moments, whether she spoke with playful smiles, or whether her dark eye glistened with emotion as she touched on her beloved patroness's season of suffering, or on any moving circumstance of the past; whether she expressed opinions which differed from those of others, or obeyed Nadine's injunction to repeat some narrative which in her own mouth timidity would render confused or tedious, Leonore's manner was as remarkable for modest dignity as for graceful ease. Nadine was delighted to see her friend again in her happiest mood. The Countess Justine was very

ill pleased to discover that Leonore ever could be what she was at this moment. Adalbert appeared to take his tone from her ; he resumed with joy the position he used to occupy with his cousin and her companion. At length Leonore quitted the room, to the evident relief of Madame Von Lichtenthal, who, however, was unable for a few moments to break the blank silence which followed. After a time she exclaimed :

“A charming *dame de compagnie* really Mademoiselle Körner will make, and she is also very accomplished, is she not, in addition to her conversational powers ? I feel quite interested in her establishment, my dear Nadine, for you must be aware she is too young to fill that post with you.”

“I do not at all comprehend your meaning,” replied Nadine with vexation. “What can make you suppose that she needs any post at all ? Leonore is with me as she has always been.”

“Oh ! that was very well as long as you were children, but of course now the poor girl must wish to provide for herself, and the education you have given her will facilitate the task.”

“No ; she has never learned with me two accomplishments very commonly required in a *dame de compagnie*—flattery and servility. I

don't think the position would suit Leonore at all, and perhaps you will not when you know her better," said Nadine, with a degree of anger in her manner very unusual to her.

"Adieu, my dear; I promised to be with Madame de B—— early, in order to make all the arrangements for your presentation at the court of the Dowager Duchess of —— to-morrow."

"Oh! I thank you—you are very kind," answered Nadine, with a little self-reproach; and the moment she found herself alone with Adalbert she turned to him, and exclaimed: "I must say, Adalbert, that I think you Germans are very cold-hearted, very unpolished in your manners, very dull in perception. Whenever I have taken Leonore out before, her beauty and her fascination were universally acknowledged; her *genre* suited everybody; her seriousness did not awe, because her vivacity was so graceful; her melancholy did not weary, because her smile enchanted. Here I see her neglected."

"Why ask me to read this mystery, fair cousin, when my mother has so fully unravelled it?" replied Adalbert, striving to speak jestingly, but unable to conceal that other feelings lay beneath. "You are making an attempt that never will succeed. You cannot introduce Made-

moiselle Körner into the circles in which you were born to move. The more beautiful, amiable, accomplished she is, the more anxiously will the women strive to banish her, and the more shall we men fear her."

"No, no," said Nadine, speaking rather to herself than her cousin, "those words must not prove true; it shall not be too late." Then striving to regain a playful tone, she continued: "Do you know, my dear cousin, that I was terribly afraid lest I should be forced to leave her in Paris. Perhaps, had she known what her reception here would be, she might have proved less inflexible." Again Nadine's eyes brightened with indignation. "As it was, neither friends nor lovers could prevail. Wise counsels, passionate entreaties, fell on her ear alike unheeded. She was true to her country and to her early friends, and what can they be but true to her?"

"I see that you are both true to yourselves," replied Adalbert, also striving to retain a tone of badinage; "you never vehement but when Leonore is assailed, and Leonore"—he paused—"the same queenly creature as ever. Fear not, Nadine; she will not want subjects, let her go where she may."

“Mademoiselle Körner!” Had not Adalbert, in the beginning of the conversation, thus named Leonore? and if so, what did the term mean? Was it suggested by the bashfulness of a feeling deeper than the boyish admiration he used rapturously to express? What, too, was the secret of the embarrassment with which both had evidently met each other on the preceding night? With Leonore it had passed away like the dim haze of morning, and Adalbert, in the sunshine of her smile, had also emerged from it; but on her departure a cloud again shadowed his brow, which Nadine confessed to herself she could not see through. The seeming inconsistency of Leonore’s behaviour to Count Adalbert had a very definite cause, of which she was herself perfectly conscious. She knew not whether the embarrassment which attended their first meeting originated with him or with her, or was mutual; but, once recognised, it was insurmountable, and the speedy close of the evening was welcome to both. Leonore, on retiring to her chamber, blushed for the betrayal of a confusion which she considered injurious to Adalbert, and degrading to herself. It involved, as it were, an untruth; for if she esteemed him bound to her by no promise, what had she to expect, or to claim, that

she should meet him as if in suspense and doubt? After many sleepless hours she rose, resolved to retrieve her error on the next occasion, and this resolution was the cause of her very different reception of the young count, that was not without its desired effect. He felt relieved, he scarce knew how. He could return to the past with pleasure, and dwell in the present with enjoyment. Was it then a thought of the future which called that shadow to his brow which baffled Leonore, clear-sighted as she was, as well as Nadine? "Not yet," she murmured to herself, as day after day it hovered there, and caused their intercourse to wear

"The uncertain glory of an April day,
Which now shows all the brightness of the sun,
And by and by a cloud takes all away;"

"not yet do I read him right."

CHAPTER XIII.

“Amid those scenes delusion cannot reign :
Bring me but there, I am a child again.”

“ADALBERT is not the gay creature I expected to find him,” said Nadine in a pensive tone. “Does not the change strike you, Leonore?”

“At times,” replied Leonore, who never could bring herself to speak of the young count but with the utmost reserve.

“Ah! you mean that there are seasons when his spirits run higher than ever; but it appears to me that he sinks into positive gloom immediately afterwards. Still, whatever may be the outward change, I am sure he is the same Adalbert at heart. I have seen enough to attain that conviction.” And the little countess fell to musing on the scheme by which she trusted ere long to acquaint herself with all the secrets of Adalbert’s heart, for the sole purpose of accomplishing whatsoever desire might be cherished in it.

The silence which she and Leonore appeared well content to maintain was broken by Adalbert's entrance. Nadine looked up and exclaimed: "Oh! my dear cousin, how tormenting have been all the assurances which you have so repeatedly made in your letters that you certainly could not come to ——; for, believing these declarations, I made arrangements for going to Lichtenthal at this time, and I must remain there at least eight days, which is far more than I would willingly have taken from the month you have to give us."

"My mother—does she accompany you?" asked Adalbert.

"O no! she would not leave the capital for a week on any account. I am very glad to do so; that is, I should have been very glad if you had not arrived in it. I am quite weary of a court, its *gêne*, and its monotony. I amused myself in Paris; but what was pleasure there is duty here, and I want a holiday. I mean to be very happy, very happy indeed, when I reach the shades of Lichtenthal."

"I shall certainly pay you a visit of a few hours at least. You cannot love those shades better than I do, nor be more willing to quit a

court for them. I have to endure far more of its formalities than you."

"Oh, do come! To see the dear old château without you is but a very imperfect return to past days; but with you and with Leonore it is complete."

The little countess had usually much tact in perceiving how persons were affected by any subject started in conversation, and considered with delicacy and kindness the feelings which she discovered. Was it possible that she uttered such words as these carelessly—words which touched Adalbert to the quick? One so well acquainted with his ingenuous countenance as was Nadine could scarcely fail to read in it that he was painfully agitated. Perhaps she did not look at him, but only glanced at Leonore, who had not once raised her eyes from the book she was holding since Count Adalbert entered the room. Nadine thought she turned pale, for the long eyelashes that swept her cheek looked very black. Still the countess seemed too much occupied by her theme to dwell on anything else, and recurring to it, she added:

"It will indeed be delightful to be together there. We shall feel then, much more distinctly than we can in this artificial atmosphere, how

unchanged we all are at heart. Will it not be so, Adalbert?" And this time she turned to him for a reply, and fixed her eyes earnestly on him while she awaited it.

"It may be," he answered, with embarrassment; "it may be." Then recovering himself from the confusion which he had betrayed, he said, with serious, sad composure: "Yes; I believe that on that spot all illusions would cease, and that we should recognise how far we resemble the children who parted there, and how far we are changed."

"I would not desire to read of change," exclaimed Nadine. "Better stay here than go there if it would reveal one."

"No," said Leonore, speaking for the first time; "not so. Count Adalbert certainly hath given your wish a very different turn from that which you meant, but it seems to me a higher one. He speaks of a visit to Lichtenthal as of an entrance into the Palace of Truth. Why shrink? Who would not rather take to his heart the bitterest truth than the sweetest delusion?"

As she asked this question Adalbert gazed on her noble brow and serious eye; but he seemed startled, unwilling to follow whither she

led, and discarding hastily the gravity which he had first introduced, he answered with a laugh :

“Certainly, we most of us shrink from truth ; but why should Nadine ? That is a question I cannot answer.”

At this moment his mother entered the room, a circumstance which entirely changed the conversation. Nadine addressing her, rose :

“I am engaged to you, madame, to make some farewell visits before my departure. Shall we set out ?”

The Countess Justine assented, and Leonore also prepared to take leave of the only friends she had made in —, who loved her dearly, and who would regret her absence, even though short. Leonore, however, was not certain that it would, for her, terminate so quickly as Nadine said. She had a half-formed project of now accomplishing the visit to the intendant which she had formerly proposed ; but separation from Wilhelmine was a painful necessity which she could scarcely resolve to encounter. “I am very miserable in —,” she thought ; “but if one yet more miserable than I am derives comfort from my staying here, shall I go ?” At this interrogation she half reproached herself with the frequent

visits which had been until now a source of satisfaction to her. "Have I not habituated Wilhelmine to my presence, without considering that I might be preparing future suffering for her when circumstances should oblige me to withdraw it? Has my error the plea of inexperience, or is it an evidence of indwelling, unsuspected selfishness?"

When Leonore first saw Wilhelmine she had looked almost unwillingly on a face and form worn and distorted by suffering, but she had soon learned to think the poor girl's countenance one of the most expressive and interesting she had ever beheld. In her daily visits to the hospital her entrance at the end of the long ward was not always immediately observed by Wilhelmine, and she could often perceive her seated in an attitude which most painfully denoted the excess of lassitude and depression, her head bowed down on her breast, her hands hanging listlessly beside her. But let her turn and suddenly recognise her approaching friend, and what a change was there! How her lustreless eye lit up with fire! what animation in every gesture! and nothing could be more endearing than the sweet childlike expression which Wilhelmine's smile diffused over her pale face. To effect this

transformation usually caused Leonore one of the most delightful sensations she had ever experienced; but to-day, when her eyes met those of Wilhelmine, she felt pierced to the heart.

"Wilhelmine," she said, holding her hand affectionately, "I am going to quit —— for a short time."

"And why?" asked Wilhelmine, her face changing rapidly, like a day when each sickly struggle of the sunbeams is succeeded by a darker storm.

"The Countess Nadine is going to her castle of Lichtenthal, and I must accompany her. I have relations there whom I have not seen for a long time——"

"And now you will stay with them a long time, I suppose?" interrupted Wilhelmine, who had energetically resumed a piece of work thrown away on Leonore's appearance. She did not once raise her eyes as she spoke, but drops hung on their long lashes, which made Leonore sadly anticipate what was to follow.

"I do not know that," she answered, with hesitation.

"Then you do not know the contrary; you do not know when you shall return? I was sure by your step that you brought ill-tidings.

You do not intend to return any more ; but it signifies little to me : I shall die."

"I think not before I return," said Leonore softly. "Indeed, I mean to do so, although I cannot tell thee exactly the day. Oh ! Wilhelmine, you will make me very unhappy if you weep thus. I shall reproach myself with having cost you these tears, and Sister Joanna will reproach me too, and wish that I had never come here."

"No ; she will wish you back, as I do. Sister Joanna has reason enough to know that my heart is not of stone, that I should see you go, and not weep. She would not have me be ungrateful."

"No, but she would have us both patient and resigned to whatever trial and sorrow God sends us ; and indeed, Wilhelmine, I feel that to leave you is both to me——"

Leonore's voice faltered, and she mingled her tears with Wilhelmine's. The girl grew more composed.

"Open that for me," she said, pointing to a trunk beside her. It contained her little wardrobe, and all her hoard of treasures. "Give me that packet," she continued ; and unfolding it, she took out a white garment and a wreath of

white roses. "This is my shroud and my virgin crown, which Sister Joanna made for me when she thought I was dying. I keep them here, and look at them from time to time." She proceeded to wrap them up again deliberately. "Before you return I shall be clad in these."

"And if so," replied Leonore, bending towards her, "may they prove the robe of peace and the crown of joy!"

This answer pleased Wilhelmine far better than any contradiction would have done. Sister Joanna appeared at the door of the convent, which was nearly opposite Wilhelmine's bed.

"Come here, come here," she exclaimed, waving her hand; "she is going away—going to leave me in all my former loneliness, and she tells me not to weep—but see, she weeps herself!"

"Is it true, my child, that we are about to lose thee?" asked Sister Joanna, tenderly placing her hand on Leonore's shoulder.

"Only for a time—I believe—I hope—only for a short time," replied Leonore; then, yielding to a sudden impulse, she took the nun's hand and Wilhelmine's, and clasping both, she said, while her countenance and tone spoke how deeply she felt: "But that time will not be short to

me—it will be a time of temptation, a time of struggle, a time of agony—a time during which, as either of you have love or pity in your hearts, you will pray for me, better, more calmly, than I shall know how to pray for myself. Now let me go.”

She bent down and kissed Wilhelmine's cheek. She cast herself into the arms of Sister Joanna, and there lingered a moment, as if on her breast she tasted repose. Then she departed without another look or word: she needed no assurance that they would comply with her entreaty.

“Ah!” said Sister Joanna, looking after her with gentle compassion, “ah, Wilhelmine, our duties are more simple than those of that poor maiden. Our path is plainer!”

CHAPTER XIV.

"She fair, he full of bashfulness and truth,
Loved much, hoped little, and desired naught."
FAIRFAX'S TASSO.

"I EXPECT to see you at Lichtenthal," said the Countess Nadine, bending forward, and speaking in a low voice to her cousin, as he stood beside the carriage in which she and Leonore Körner were seated on the point of departure.

"I shall certainly come," replied Adalbert in the same tone. He ordered the driver to proceed, and remained in deep thought for a few moments on the spot where they left him; then entering, he sprang up the staircase, reached his own chamber, took out his writing materials, and began a letter:

"Dear Gustav——"

He threw down his pen, walked to the window, leaned on the balcony for some minutes, returned to the table, wrote three pages without

pausing, and with an air of deep interest; then suddenly broke off, cast down the pen, blotting much of his writing, so as to render it illegible. He took two or three turns in his apartment, snatched up his letter, tore it to atoms, and scattered them out of the window. He reseated himself, sought a fresh sheet of paper, and recommenced :

“ Dear Gustav——”

This time he could proceed no farther, though he deliberated for at least a quarter of an hour. He therefore locked up his desk, and went to see his mother in order to talk about Nadine, and to try, by feigning indifference, to extract one word of praise for Leonore. He obtained nothing but the reiteration of advice which he always heard with impatience, that he should retrieve the ruined fortunes of his family by seeking the hand of the little heiress, now in possession of its chief remaining estates, and who, apart from the predilection which she evinced for Adalbert, might naturally be more disposed to rescue her own race from obscurity than to enrich another. As such was the drift not only of this, but of every conversation which the Countess Justine held with her son, it might have been supposed that she would have been charmed with his

project of visiting Lichtenthal ; but Adalbert did not communicate it.

Nadine, throughout their journey of a day, perceived Leonore's deep dejection. Gladly would she have dispelled it by a thousand little demonstrations of love, but that delicacy of feeling, which was her peculiar characteristic, forbade her to make plain her observation of it ; and she had the consolation of a secret hope that ere long she should be able to remove its cause. Their conversation turned on Wilhelmine, and while on this theme Leonore could taste the relief of tears without exciting surprise. As they approached Lichtenthal, the countess with expressions of delight, and Leonore with not less heartfelt interest, recognised each succeeding feature of its beloved scenery. At length they arrived at the castle. The intendant and his wife were there to welcome their mistress. Nadine received them with graceful kindness, and, presenting Leonore, thanked them warmly for having spared to her the friend, the nurse, to whom she owed almost everything. By the awkward greetings of her kinsmen Leonore would not allow herself to be embarrassed, and the simplicity of her own manner would have

restored ease to theirs, had their inward feelings been in unison with those they tried to express. Leonore looked round for one who, she thought, would meet her with more real cordiality.

"Where is Karl, my cousin Karl?" she asked.

"Why, he has been here all the evening, watching for the carriage, and was the first to give notice that it had entered the avenue, and now I do not know where he is," replied his father.

He was not far distant, and, thus inquired for, emerged from his place of concealment. His appearance was rustic, but his countenance was strikingly expressive of a truthful and benevolent nature, nor were his dark blue eyes without a shade of pensive sentiment. Welcomed by Leonore, and addressed by the countess, it was with difficulty that he maintained sufficient self-possession to make any distinct or appropriate reply to their interrogations. Both perceived and pitied the confusion which extinguished every ray of native intelligence, and they allowed poor Karl to escape. Not satisfied with quitting their presence, he darted through the crowd of impertinent menials, left the castle, and paused not till he regained his humbler home. Then

casting back his eyes to the old grey towers, illuminated with unwonted brilliancy in honour of their lady's return, he remained in contemplation of the rare and beautiful effect of the sparkling lights among the dark thick foliage of the encircling woods. The voices of Leonore and of the countess still sounded in his ears. "I am sure that sweet lady would never teach pride to any one," he exclaimed, "and Leonore is not proud. It is not pride that must make her despise me;" and he covered his face with his hands to hide blushes and tears which there was no eye to see.

The next morning Leonore rose early, cast one look on Nadine, who lay like a fair child asleep, and quitting the castle, took a path which she had little loved to tread when last its precincts were her "daily walk and ancient neighbourhood," the path which led to the intendant's house. She had dressed herself with the greatest simplicity that her wardrobe permitted, and had thrown a shawl over her head in preference to the Parisian bonnet, for she wished to look as little strange as possible in her kinsmen's eyes. The morning was so sweet, the rural scene so beautiful, so refreshing to the spirit was every sight, and sound, and scent, that

during her walk Leonore had half persuaded herself that she was on the road to happiness. Before she could reach the entrance of the house she had to pass the windows of the apartment in which the family assembled at their meals. Not one of its members being visible without, she concluded that it was at this hour so engaged, and paused to look in through the clustering honeysuckle, desirous to find nothing repulsive in the appearance of an abode which she felt might possibly be again her fittest home. There was a long table spread with coarse and homely fare in no very great abundance; strict frugality was still, as formerly, the order of the house. At its head sat her kinsman, and her first view of him in his own element confirmed her last night's suspicion, that he was as unloving and as unlovable as she had found him in her childhood. His hard-featured wife was beside him, watching with the same keen eye as of old the proceedings of the domestics at the lower end of the board, as if she grudged them the food they ate, and the time they consumed in swallowing it. Leonore felt that she looked with repugnance on the scene, but the frame of mind in which she then was disposed her rather to seek some object that

would mitigate the sensation, than to reflect how much all that disgusted at first sight would destroy the comfort and happiness of every-day life. Her eyes rested on Karl; it was of him that they were in search. On the table beside him was a beautiful white pigeon, which he was carefully feeding with crumbs. Leonore's heart was touched: here she found what she greatly desired to find—a proof of genuine love. She left the window, approached the entrance, and knocked. It was Karl—perhaps he had caught a glimpse of her white dress,

“Making a sunshine in a shady place,”

—who opened the door, but he hung back in confusion.

“Karl, I think thou dost scarcely know me yet,” said Leonore, extending her hand.

The young man took it and pressed it earnestly to his lips, but with an air of deference as great as the countess herself could have commanded.

“Leonore Körner!” cried the intendant and his wife within; and they came forward to greet her, somewhat gratified by this early visit. Leonore did not read in their overstrained courtesy the effect which the Countess Nadine's manifesta-

tion of her love had worked on them since the preceding evening. They nourished vague ideas of deriving benefits they knew not how great from the fondness of their mistress for their young kinswoman, whom it was now evidently their interest to conciliate. She felt oppressed by their manner, and was glad to turn away to speak to some of the domestics whom she thought she remembered; from them she came back to Karl, who had not interchanged one word or look with her since the first of recognition.

"My pigeon, Karl," she said, with a smile of singular beauty, now but too rarely on her lips, and which rendered her whole face radiant when its brilliancy broke through the mournful veil which of late had obscured its light—"my pigeon, which you promised to cherish for my sake. I need not ask how you have kept your word. I know already. I saw it through the window, partaking of your breakfast."

Karl crimsoned as she spoke, but the emotion which she excited, though painful in degree, was pleasurable in its nature. He turned and caught the bird, which he brought to Leonore. It was so tame that it lay quietly in her hands while she pressed it to her bosom, and kissed its snowy crest.

“And thou—dost thou also remember?” cried Karl joyfully.

It was not quite clear whether the words were addressed to the pigeon or to Leonore, who now took leave, saying:

“I shall return again, since I find I am not forgotten.”

“You are very much changed, and yet not at all,” said Frau Körner, looking at her fixedly. “I should have known you anywhere; yet, had I seen you among great ladies, I should have believed you one of them.”

Leonore laughed; Karl turned abruptly away, and she departed alone, for he did not dare offer to accompany her back to the castle.

CHAPTER XV.

"Il veut tout ce qu'il fait, et s'il m'épouse, il m'aime."

RACINE.

"Io sento che in petto
Mi palpita il core,
Nè so qual sospetto
Mi faccia tremar.
Se dubbio è il contento,
Diventa in amore
Sicuro tormento
L'incerto piacer."

METASTASIO.

"WHERE is Mademoiselle Körner?" asked Nadine one morning, seating herself with some embroidery in the window in which, when a child, her couch had always been placed.

"She is gone to the intendant's, madame," was the reply; and perhaps there was a little malice in the tone in which it was made, that caused it to grate harshly on the countess's ear.

“I wish she would not go there so much,” she thought. “How sadly that parterre wants her taste; it is not half so lovely as it was when she used to gather flowers from it, and scatter them over me while I lay here. Dear Leonore! my friend, my companion, in sickness and health, in sorrow and in joy, linked with every memory of the past, included in every project for the future, shall I let the world, which I already know too well to esteem or love it, come between us, rudely or insidiously, to separate us for ever? Surely that could not be for your happiness any more than for my own. It is possible, as that woman with her keen sarcasm pronounced, that it had been better for you had I never poured out all my fondness on you; but now to withdraw it cannot repair the injury I have thoughtlessly, nay, rather, ignorantly inflicted. Ah! they say the ivy is harmful to the tree round which it winds itself: thus have I been to you. You have upheld me, and I have been your bane! Never, never, till I have undone this evil, and worked out your happiness, ought this heart to be free to pursue any other object; and I can see the path before me—I will follow it steadily to the end. No difficulty too great to encounter, no sacrifice too hard to make, to

accomplish this duty. Sacrifice! Why do I speak of sacrifice? It is but of myself——”

Nadine's meditations were here cut short; the approaching gallop of a horse reached her ear. She started up, ran quickly into the outer hall, and, mounting to the window by some stone steps, saw Adalbert enter the court. In another moment he would be at her side. Her heart beat quickly; her colour varied rapidly.

“Leonore is absent,” she thought; “this is my opportunity. I must not, I will not lose it!”

Nadine and her cousin stood in the old baronial hall of Lichtenthal, round the walls of which were suspended the portraits of their ancestry. Among those of the female line was one so much more remarkable than any of the others, from the beauty of the lady it represented, that it could never fail to arrest the gaze of the passer by. Her dress was not less gorgeous than that of her companions, and certainly there was nothing in that lofty brow, full lip, snowy throat, and proud dark eye, in unison with the tale which told how the majestic dame had been but the miller's lovely daughter in the sweet valley of Blumenbach, that bounded the noble graf's domains. In a hunting expedition he first

saw and loved, and in his huntsman's dress wooed and won her as an equal, and then brought her as his bride to the lordly dwelling which nature had formed her to adorn. Nadine led Adalbert across the hall, as if to the room she had just quitted. He saw how her hand trembled on his arm. She stopped suddenly before the picture we have described, and turning to him she said :

“Has this ever made you think of Leonore?”

“What do you mean?” faltered Adalbert.

“That it resembles her?”

“No, not in feature. But have you not often thought that this fair woman could not have deserved elevation so much as Leonore does? Have you not sometimes envied the bold spirit who dared to elevate her?”

“Such thoughts suit ill days like ours,” replied Adalbert moodily; and entering the inner apartment, he threw himself on a seat, and resting his forehead on his hands, remained in silent, gloomy abstraction. Nadine came to him, and standing beside him, placed her hand on his shoulder tenderly, and her voice could not but fall like music, sweet yet sad, upon his ear.

“Adalbert, dearest Adalbert, think who is near you now. Am I not your own little cousin, your own Nadine? Have we not been brother

and sister to each other? Was there not a time when I was intrusted with all your thoughts, your wishes, your projects? If you had a grief it was mine to lighten it; if you had a joy it was mine to double it. Thus it was: it is not so now. If you had known how dearly I prized this privilege you would not need me to tell how miserable it has made me, since my return, to discover that I no longer possess it. Could you think I should not perceive the shade on your brow unless you pointed to the cloud which cast it? Oh, Adalbert! be to me as you once were. Both will be far happier then. It is in this hope that I entreated you to come hither, because I could not, cannot believe that in these dear familiar scenes your heart will remain closed to me."

"You have read it too well, as your words just now proved, Nadine," replied Adalbert.

"Say not too well. I have read nothing that drives me to despair; and why, then, should you? Surely you have known that my fondest aim as a child, my firmest project as a woman, hath been to remove every obstacle from your path to happiness, as far as my power can extend. Leonore is no less dear to me. Gratitude, as well as affection, binds me to her. If it be given me to

confer happiness on both, no destiny on earth could move me to envy its brilliancy or its bliss. Do not deny me so much satisfaction, so much joy."

Adalbert was deeply affected.

"Dear Nadine, I can have no concealment from you. I am come hither to hear the decision of my fate from Leonore's own lips. There, in yonder wood, on the eve of your departure, did I vow, boy as I was, that no other woman should ever be my wife."

"For all these long years, then," exclaimed Nadine, "have Leonore's heart and yours been locked to me! I have never known their inmost hopes or fears. I might have spared both much suffering. I might have been spared much——" She stopped short: her voice told how deeply she was wounded.

"Leonore is not to blame," interposed Adalbert. "She turned a deaf ear to my protestations; she refused to accept my vows; she remained free as she desired to render me. But despite all this, despite my youth, the words which passed my lips then honour forbids me now to revoke, even if the most passionate love did not impel me to repeat them."

"Thou dost love her——"

"Far more," interrupted Adalbert vehemently, "far more than a boyish heart could love. You ask if I have ever associated Leonore in my mind with that picture. How oft, after you were gone, and the old hall knew your pale shadowy form and her brilliant presence no more, have I stood before it, musing for hours on its tale of the past ! And I believed that I could realise it until I went forth into the world, and its lessons of wisdom were substituted for the visions of fancy. And now, when my eyes are open to all the difficulty, all the evil of my position, it is now that I know how much I love her."

"Adalbert," said Nadine earnestly, "consider how deep a debt I have contracted to Leonore. It is but justice that this should be, I will not say cancelled, for that were impossible, but in some manner acknowledged. For my pleasure, my benefit, I have taken her from her own station in life, and totally disqualified her for returning to it ; but in all points, save two, she is fitted to be one of the brightest ornaments of the sphere into which I have introduced her. Her poverty my riches can remove ; her want of high birth her native nobleness must supply. You know that my minority has been very long,

and a vast sum of money has accumulated. It is Leonore's the day that I am of age."

"Generous Nadine!" cried Adalbert, catching her hand; it was cold as ice. He paused, looking at her earnestly. "This excitement is too much for you, dearest cousin."

"True, true," she replied, faintly smiling. "But go—find Leonore, bring her back to me, tell me ye both are happy, and I shall revive."

Adalbert kissed her hand, sprang from the window, and disappeared in the wood. Nadine followed him with her looks until that moment, then bowed down her head, and a few gentle tears bathed her cheek. She sank upon a seat opposite to the window, and remained with her eyes fixed on the spot where they had lost sight of Adalbert. She was quite motionless; her lips were very pale; she knew not how long she sat there. At length she saw two figures emerge from the wood and approach the castle. She started up and hastily retreated. She wrestled with this involuntary impulse. She returned, and again sat like a fair statue, or a spell-bound maiden. In a few moments Leonore is kneeling beside her, her face buried in her lap; suddenly, raising it streaming with tears, she asked, in a tone of timidity:

"Tell me, Nadine, do you faithfully believe that I have decided for his happiness?"

"I do," replied Nadine, kissing her brow.

"To doubt that is to doubt me," said Adalbert reproachfully.

That night Nadine left her couch, on which she had found no repose, and sought Leonore. Her large dark eyes were not sealed in slumber, and their expression spoke little of peace or joy to Nadine's heart. She cast herself on her friend's neck, and clasping her almost as if under the influence of terror, she whispered :

"Only tell me once more, Leonore, that you are happy."

"Fearfully so!" was the reply; and those words never passed away from the memory of either of the friends.

CHAPTER XVI.

“And the whole peril of the future lay
Before him clearly seen.”

Don Roderic.

ON the evening of the same day which we have just brought to a conclusion, Frau Körner led her husband into the little parlour, as she never did unless she had to communicate a domestic catastrophe, or an immutable decision on some affair of vast importance to the concerns of the farm, which she regulated nearly as much as those of the house, while she resented the slightest trespass on her husband's part into her own peculiar province. The intendant followed her very unwillingly, and yawned as many times as he could contrive to do on the road from the kitchen to the beehive chair in which Frau Körner had seated herself.

“This is always the way when I have anything reasonable to say to you—a yawn or a shrug

is all I get," was her commencement. "Perhaps I have earned a supper and a night's rest as well as you have, and am as anxious to taste them; but you shall not quit this room till you have heard out what I have to say."

The intendant resigned himself to his fate, and abstained from making the inquiry for which his wife paused, knowing that a word from his lips, be it what it might, would have the effect of drawing forth a great deal of extraneous eloquence.

"Leonore was here this morning," said Frau Körner; and she stopped short and coughed. "You will never guess why she came." The intendant still looked as if he thought that it could signify very little whether she came or not. "Why, to ask if she might return to her old home here if she pleased."

The intendant now certainly was as much surprised as his wife could have desired. As soon as he could speak he said:

"Then I suppose it is all over with her at the castle, and the countess brought her here for this purpose."

"Not at all. The countess, she declares, is just as fond of her as ever, just as kind, and certainly she seemed so the other night."

“ Seemed ! What is seeming, especially among those great folks, who pass all their life like the players on a stage, always acting one lie or another ? Do you believe that Leonore would leave the castle before she was obliged, and come home here ? ”

He looked around him with a contempt which Frau Körner thought very ill placed when bestowed on her best parlour, and she was greatly displeased that he should entertain the idea that Leonore could impose on her ; so she tried to affect an air of very superior wisdom, and nodding her head, as if to say, “ You are quite wrong, Hans, depend on it,” bent forward and whispered :

“ Do you not see plainly that this girl hath fallen in love with our Karl, and nothing will satisfy her but to come home in hopes of being his wife ? She likes him better than all the fine folks she has seen in foreign parts, and therefore she proposes to live here as long as the countess stays in ——.”

This view of the subject was wholly new to the intendant ; but he seemed to adopt it without much difficulty, and after a while he replied :

“ Well, if this be so (and I won’t say that it is not) I don’t know that the boy could do better

for himself, providing always that she is the favourite with our lady countess that she says she is."

Frau Körner became indisposed to a plan, even of her own devising, when she saw it prove acceptable to her husband, and answered with an angry toss of the head :

"I really do not believe that, with all her new-fangled ways and notions, she can ever make any reasonable man comfortable ; and as for her coming home here as Karl's wife to live with me, and carry everything with her fine-lady airs, that shall never come to pass. Why, even now she speaks to me just as she speaks to Margaret, the dairy-maid."

"Nay," interrupted the intendant, "I must say I thought she spoke kindly enough to every one she remembered to have known."

"Kindly ! that is just what I mean. I should like to know what right she has to be kind to me ! Am I to be the object of her condescension ? However, I do not altogether refuse to try her a while as a visitor. Let us just say so to-night at supper, and see what Karl answers."

Karl, when he heard this announcement, listened with astonishment and incredulity. When he yielded belief it was with evident pain, which

his mother observed, but could not comprehend.

"Leonore here!" he exclaimed. "What can we do to make her happy?"

"To make her happy indeed!" repeated Frau Körner indignantly. "If she comes with those fancies she had much better stay away. She must make herself happy. And you, do you think that what is good enough for your own mother is not good enough for a girl whom we took in out of charity?"

Karl was grieved at his mother's manner; he sighed and said:

"Let it be as Leonore chooses. Let her decide."

His mother muttered some reply which he escaped hearing, and afterwards, when he was alone, he reiterated the inquiry: "How can Leonore be happy here? Alas! she cannot be happy where she is, or why should she come hither?"

Little did the faithful Karl imagine how great a revolution in all Leonore's feelings, projects, and prospects, the few intervening hours between her proposal to return to his home, and his learning her intention (one so startling to him, so delightful, yet so alarming), had worked. Would

such knowledge have dissipated his fears for her peace, and left him free to consider only his own suffering, or would his apprehensions have continued to exist, vaguely, but sufficiently to turn all his thoughts to her?

Let us inquire for ourselves what is Leonore's chance of happiness, and draw aside the veil which Adalbert has worn over his heart during all the years of her absence.

Pride of birth had for ages appeared as if inherent in the race of Lichtenthal, and, instead of being curbed, it was fostered as a sacred principle. Sometimes it, proved the spring of acts of magnanimity, sometimes of unscrupulous tyranny; sometimes it immolated every tender emotion and disinterested impulse; sometimes to ward off open disgrace it suggested secret deeds of infamy. At all periods was it utterly opposed, in its splendid virtues as in its darkest crimes, to the spirit of that religion which its children professed. Had they been charged with the apostacy of which they were thus unconsciously guilty, the very resentment which repelled the charge would have been a new proof how little the meekness of their Master had ever been admitted into their hearts. It is true that a few lovely instances of personal humility had graced

the line, such as was now presented by the Countess Nadine ; a holy bishop, a pious abbess, had even been enrolled by the Church of Rome in her list of saints. But the younger branch of the family, of which Adalbert was now the last, had always seemed to consider a larger portion of pride necessary to the due support of its inferior dignity. The Countess Justine, regarding her own union with a younger son with no great complacency, had resolved to make the advancement of her only child the object of her life, and had sedulously educated him to assist, not to defeat her purpose. But Adalbert had an ingenuousness of character and a warmth of heart which forbade him to imbibe the sordid worldliness of his mother. She saw that, if she betrayed the unworthy means by which she was content to serve her ambitious projects, she could not fail to disgust and to estrange him. She encouraged him from his childhood to be wilful, impatient of constraint, proud, ambitious of distinction. The indulgence of tempers such as these must inevitably lead him to pursue the objects which she coveted for him. Intercourse with others of his own rank soon made him feel the mortifications to which poverty exposed him. Keenly sensitive of every slight and insult, he took refuge under

the shelter of his superior nobility, and longed for power to maintain its dignity. It was a proud reluctance to see his will thwarted and his authority resisted, added to the natural ardour of his affections, which had led Adalbert, as an enthusiastic, passionate boy, to struggle to conquer Leonore's opposition, and at least to prove to her that she was unable to prevent him from uttering the vows which he could not force her to accept. The remembrance of that childish scene of violence and passion, the image of the lovely maiden whose charms had occasioned it, never faded away; but when he quitted the visionary shades of Lichtenthal to mix in society the most artificial, other thoughts and feelings developed themselves with growing years and altered circumstances, and at length the recollection of that parting interview became a grievous burden rather than the spring of tender regret, and hope as tender. Adalbert could not blind himself to the fact that, boy as he was, he had betrothed himself to his young companion, with a seriousness of word and purpose which his matured sense of honour pronounced it impossible to dismiss as a child's sport. His own hands had forged the chain which now galled his neck. When these painful thoughts began to present

themselves to his mind the young count yearned for friendly counsel ; yet an unacknowledged distrust of his mother's sense of honour being delicate as his own, a secret dread that she would exhibit an unscrupulous violence, prevented him from making her his confidante. Time at length supplied him with the friend he needed in Gustav Von Plessin, the colonel of the regiment in which he received his commission, yet only a few years his senior. In many respects their characters presented one of those marked contrasts which not unfrequently form the basis of strict friendship ; the world pronounced the intimacy calculated to be highly beneficial to Adalbert. His romance and impetuosity were admirably met and controlled by the strong sense, clear judgment, and caution of Gustav, who was at the same time undoubtedly brave, high spirited, and prudent rather for others than for himself. In familiar daily intercourse he had a sweetness of temper which Adalbert's impatience and caprice (and the indulgence of his childhood had given him both) could never ruffle, and an absence of self-love which prevented him from contending with others for petty pleasures and interests. The affection which he conceived for Adalbert was warm and sincere, and before long inspired so firm a re-

liance on it, that the youth gladly sought the relief of communicating the difficulties and doubts which preyed on him. The decision of such a man as we have described can be easily anticipated. His opinions, delivered with candour and unsparing plainness, probably went further to strengthen Adalbert's desire to recall the past than any artful and inflaming speeches of the Countess Justine could have done ; Gustav, if not less worldly than herself, was more upright. He desired for his friend the same prizes which she urged him to seek ; but he could never counsel their attainment by the slightest act of baseness, nor value them so won. He was intolerant of the idea that the prospects of manhood could be ruined by the folly of a childish vow ; yet his sense of honour accorded with that of Adalbert, and forbade him to forget that it had passed his lips. He foresaw nothing but misery as the result of its fulfilment ; and his pity extended even to Leonore, for he was touched by the generosity and delicacy which she had displayed when she dissuaded Adalbert from his promise, and refused to ratify it by one of her own. But would such sentiments continue in existence as she became more alive to self-interest, and better acquainted with the

world? Gustav thought not. He was not by nature suspicious, because his own disposition was candid and upright; but he had a keen eye for the arts of others. He believed most to be made of base metal, and felt no surprise when, in the furnace of trial, little of the pure ore was found to remain in the crucible. Yet, with this just estimation of the world in which he lived, he had not been able to raise himself above it, nor had any wish to detach his friend from it. He consulted while he despised its opinions; he deemed its gifts indispensable, while he recognised their intrinsic worthlessness. The world feared and respected him, yet had in him a slave; yet neither the world nor himself doubted that he was a man of very superior sagacity. As long as the Countess Nadine and her *protégée* remained in Paris he encouraged himself and Adalbert to hope that some alliance would present itself too advantageous for Mademoiselle Körner to reject. As time passed on without any act on her part which set Adalbert free, his counsellor became so harassed by the difficulty of extricating him from the position in which he had placed himself that he would gladly have admitted the Countess Justine into their confidence,

in the hope that her woman's wit and mother's love would enable her to assist them. But a hint of this desire received such a decided negative from Adalbert that it was useless to pursue it. Yet when it was rumoured in — that the Countess Nadine was on the point of returning (and the rumour originated with a young nobleman who had seen her in Paris, and who spoke more of the *succès* of her beautiful companion than of the homage paid to the rank, wealth, amiability, or grace of the countess herself,) Colonel Von Plessin could not, under the influence of alarm, refrain from a step which he neither justified to himself nor revealed to Adalbert.

He sought the Countess Justine in one of those circles in which she was always to be found, and placing himself near her, very soon succeeded in accomplishing his purpose of turning the conversation on the absent heiress.

"Have you seen Count Louis von Weber since his return?" he asked.

"Yes, several times."

"Of course you were anxious to do so, for you must be aware that he has been heard to talk of nothing but your fair cousin, whose arrival amongst us is so impatiently expected. His

head is quite turned by her charms, and by the extraordinary beauty of a Mademoiselle Körner from whom she is inseparable."

The Countess Justine reddened.

"As to Nadine's charms, when she left Germany she was a little, pale, insignificant-looking child; but of course it will be the fashion to call her lovely." (Madame Von Lichtenthal was a remarkably handsome, haughty-looking woman.) "Mademoiselle Körner," she continued, in a tone of the utmost contempt; "perhaps you are not aware who she is?"

"Yes, Adalbert revealed to me that she is a dependent on your family; but she is, nevertheless, the reigning belle of Paris."

"Count Louis told me," continued the Countess Justine scornfully, "that it was indeed amusing to see the hauteur with which the intendant's cousin treats all the aristocratic slaves who are sighing and dying at her feet."

"I suppose we men—generals, statesmen, conquerors in whatever way we may be—have no sensation of prouder delight than yours in the zenith of your charms."

"Ah! you are trying to provoke me to make that very old reply, that the most beautiful of women would gladly exchange with the ugliest of

men. That says too much. I never could have endured to be ugly ; but our reign is very short," said the countess, with a sigh.

"In that your lot is not unequal ; for is ours longer ? None whose career is brilliant enough to excite envy are granted a long one, and I think I could better resign myself to the inevitable decay of personal beauty than to see the tide of popular favour roll from me while in the full possession of the faculties of mind which won, yet cannot retain it," replied Gustav ; and he continued : "There are two sorts of philosophy, one of which is unattainable to common mortals, the other rarely practised, though practicable. The first is to despise what is so fleeting ; the second, to seize occasion as it flies, rather than to deplore it lost. This last axiom some sober friend should whisper in the ear of the triumphant beauty of whom we were just speaking. Before the Countess Nadine sets out for Germany the fair Leonore should secure in lasting chains some one of her many captives."

"Of course the only chance of her forming an alliance in unison with the habits and the tone of mind she has acquired, is by marrying in a foreign country away from her own relations. I can scarcely suppose, though some of her letters

would lead one to suspect it, that my little cousin is such a perfect visionary as to imagine that she can introduce a girl like this, without birth or fortune, into our circles."

"Quite impossible!" replied Colonel Von Plessin, adapting his voice and manner to the increasing energy of the Countess Justine. "It would be kind on your part to set things at once in their real point of view before these fair enthusiasts."

"Oh! I daresay Nadine would rebel at the idea of separation. She has doted on this girl from a child."

"But she would consult her friend's interest——"

"Nonsense! the *enfants gâtés* of fortune never behave in that sort of way. The favours they shower have as much their own gratification for their end as the services they exact. As long as Leonore Körner is her favourite, Nadine will not part with her easily; but if the girl return here she will inevitably fall back into her real position, and probably reap nothing but unhappiness from ever having left it."

"Perhaps she will not sink into the shade so easily," replied Gustav, with a smile. "Beauty will touch our hearts, though Prudence tries to

blind our eyes to it. You would bestow a general benefit on all of us if you would exert yourself to prevent the appearance of such an enchantress amongst us. And remember, Adalbert, like the rest, will be exposed to the danger."

The countess's eyes flashed.

"Danger! There is none to one in whose veins my blood flows."

Gustav saw that he had said quite enough, and quitted the countess's side the first moment that he could silently withdraw. A letter such as he had counselled was written the next day, and dispatched to Paris. When Nadine had perused it she crushed it angrily in her little hand, and the next moment the flames consumed it.

CHAPTER XVII.

“Purely to save thy credit, much indeed
Endangered by thy wilfulness and haste.”

Philip Van Artevelde.

COLONEL VON PLESSIN sedulously avoided any recurrence of such a conversation as we have repeated with Madame Von Lichtenthal, and prepared with great alacrity to obey an order which he shortly afterwards received to remove his regiment to a quarter at a distance from the capital. When there, he always dissuaded Adalbert from the wish to return to —; but at length, on the near approach of his coming of age, many affairs rendered his presence necessary; and he had also resolved, with a firmness which Gustav could not shake, that before the day of that event he would know whether he was a slave or free. He had parted from the friend whom he considered alike kind and judicious with sincere affection, and with assurances that

he would write to him constantly, and acquaint him with every occurrence that could have any important result. These assurances were repeated in a letter written by Adalbert on the first night of his journey to —; but from that time no further tidings of him arrived, until Colonel Von Plessin, perplexed and annoyed, resolved to follow him, and ascertain for himself the cause of a silence which he thought augured very ill. It was on a post day, which brought no letter from —, that Gustav framed this determination, and he meant to delay its execution only for a few hours, while he performed an engagement which he had entered into with an officer of the corps to break an unruly but magnificent charger belonging to the latter, which had hitherto resisted all attempts to overcome its fiery temper; but every one agreed in the opinion that the unrivalled horsemanship of their colonel would triumph where others had failed. Gustav shared their confidence, but unfortunately the sole result of his attempt was a severe fall, and the injuries he received were of a nature sufficiently serious to render it improbable that he could quickly leave the bed to which they confined him. In these weary hours of suffering the silence of Adalbert was thought on with

increasing annoyance, and Gustav repeatedly upbraided himself with the folly of an exploit which had suited better a hairbrained youth of eighteen.

"This provoking accident had better, far better, have happened to Adalbert than to me," he cried. "It would not have done him half the mischief which I am persuaded he is doing himself. Indeed, it might have proved a singular blessing to him to have been chained, at this moment, to the couch to which I am so inopportunistically bound. While he lay railing at the malignant influence of his stars, I could have poured into his ears my friendly admonitions and sage counsels. I cannot get rid of a feeling that he will ruin himself for ever for want of having me at his elbow; yet that stubborn fellow, the surgeon, will not give me a hope of quitting my bed for a fortnight at least; and, if fever comes on, looks as if he would not say what might be the consequence. I will forbid him to show his long face at my door. Well, to-morrow is post day; I must wait with patience, and hope for something then."

To-morrow arrived, and brought no letter from Adalbert, but one sealed with the Lichten-thal crest, and directed by a woman's hand.

"What!" said Gustav, "has he too been

thrown from a horse, and broken his arm or his neck, that he can't write himself, I wonder?" and, with some apprehension and much curiosity, he broke the seal. He glanced at the signature; it was the Countess Justine's.

"I write to you," she said, "because I believe you to be the most sincere and judicious friend that my foolish, headstrong son possesses; and though I must tell you that I do not think you have treated me well (for I am convinced, from various remarks and hints which have passed your lips, that you have long had some suspicion of the plot against the peace and honour of our house which has now discovered itself), yet I write in a forgiving mood, because I feel sure at least that you will come to my aid, and lend me your powerful support and invaluable counsel.

"You know that Adalbert is of age the 20th of this month, though Heaven knows he has not yet reached the years of discretion, as what I am about to communicate will fully prove. His return to —— caused me the liveliest joy, and I would willingly have forbidden him to leave my side for a moment. However, he went to visit his cousin at Schloss Lichtenthal, and returned only last night to acquaint me that, at

the approaching celebration of his majority, he should make it publicly known that he is on the point of marriage with Leonore Körner! My outraged feelings, my indignant expression of them, my anguish for this misguided boy—in-fatuated by a woman as beautiful, as clever, as accomplished, as the most ambitious and designing could desire to be, and encouraged by her friend, who pushes romantic folly to the utmost verge—I do not attempt to describe; but it is necessary to tell you that all I urged proved unavailing, and he left me stubborn and incensed.

“I appeal to you, a man of mature judgment and knowledge of the world, to assist me to restrain my unhappy son from the commission of an act of which he will repent all the remaining years of his life, and which, could he persuade any reasonable being that it will administer to his own happiness, still inflicts a blow on the honour of his family which it is infamy to strike.

“Come, if possible; writing, I fear, would be useless. You see time is short.”

“Short indeed!” said Gustav. “I perceive plainly why he has not written. He has nothing to say which he thinks would satisfy me. His judgment is as opposed as ever to this step,

nor can it be ceded to honour; for, had that imperatively demanded it, he would have trusted to obtain my consent. It is in obedience to the mere dictates of revived passion. Would that I could fly to save him from himself! It is impossible. I cannot walk—I cannot stand!”

All the remainder of the day was spent by Colonel Von Plessin in a state of feverish annoyance, which could only tend to retard his recovery. He composed, one after another, letters of admonition and of reproach to Adalbert; sometimes he tried the calmest and most rational appeals, sometimes indulged in a biting sarcasm. But ere he began the painful effort of committing any of these effusions to paper, he rejected the design of dispatching them. The more forcible, the more undeniable they were, the more averse would Adalbert be to consider them, and probably might take refuge in violent resentment. Could he bestow on the Countess Justine any counsels which, faithfully followed, would effect the purpose they had alike in view? He might advise her to remonstrate with Leonore, to call Nadine to her aid. He might send her the last letter, in which Adalbert confessed the ill results which he apprehended from such a union as he had now resolved on, and his regret for his boyish im-

prudence. Surely this would open the eyes of his cousin, blinded as she might be by partiality for her favourite. Surely Leonore's love or pride, if either were strong (and one probably was so), would revolt from the acceptance of a sacrifice. Pacified by the hopefulness of this idea, Gustav obtained a few hours' slumber, and awoke refreshed; but it is often the case that the very plan which appears most promising and most sagacious when we close our eyes, assumes a totally different character in the fresh light of morning. Could Adalbert ever forgive him for communicating his letter to the mother, whom he had absolutely refused to admit to his confidence? Moreover, had he not himself an opinion of the Countess Justine too mean to allow him to feel assured that she would proceed in any way that he could approve of? A day was lost, and nothing yet devised to save his friend. He laid his hand on the bell, and rang it sharply. His servant instantly appeared. No man had more obedient or better trained domestics than Colonel Von Plessin.

"A carriage must immediately be prepared with a mattress in it, and towards noon I shall set off for ——."

The man looked frightened.

"Do you understand? You fool, I am not raving! Go, see to it."

A few minutes brought the surgeon to Gustav's side.

"You told your servant that you were not raving, Colonel Von Plessin; at least, that is the surly reply I obtained from him when I inquired the purpose of his preparations. Now, I say that you are, and I am come to treat you accordingly."

"Pooh, doctor! the time is passed when I could submit to your tyranny. My affairs are too serious to be trifled with. To — I must go to-day."

"You will not reach it alive."

"Yes, I shall. Come, you may accompany me."

"Sheer loss of my time. I can do you no good. You will be a dying man before you are gone half way."

"Nonsense; I feel considerably better."

"Mere feverish excitement."

"Fever never made any man feel better. Now understand me, doctor. I will set out; I may be unable to proceed. Come with me, and if you see the effects of the movement to be dangerous I will stop."

The surgeon shrugged his shoulders, and then promised compliance, for he saw it was useless to offer further opposition. At noon he and his patient set out. Gustav's pale cheek and compressed lip betrayed the pain he suffered, but his companion perceived that he would endure no comment on it. They travelled till near midnight. The evening had been refreshingly cool, the night air became keen and cold. The hand of Gustav was like a burning coal. They bore him from the carriage. He turned to the surgeon with a smile which the sickness of pain rendered very faint, and said :

" Assist me to write a few lines, and after that you shall find me the most obedient patient you ever possessed."

The surgeon hastened to facilitate the performance of this act as much as he could, and Gustav wrote, in characters which betrayed the tremulousness of his hand :

" MADAM,

" I am the most intimate friend of Adalbert Von Lichtenthal, and have in all things hitherto possessed his confidence. Nevertheless, it is not through himself that I have been made acquainted with his present position. The in-

closed letter, the last I have received from him, perhaps accounts for this unusual silence, and will also explain to you why, soon after a severe fall from my horse, I have travelled towards him with pain and peril. I can proceed no further. I despair of any letter to him effecting my purpose. I appeal to you ; in your hands I place the happiness of the man whom I suppose you to love. A disinterested decision on your part will be of more value than that of any other person, and I have heard much of your character which leads me to expect it to be so. This is the only measure I can devise in my unhappy condition to induce two people to pause ere they take a step which must involve both in misery. It may provoke resentment, it may deserve blame ; but I trust you will eventually pardon, Madam,

“ Your humble servant,

“ GUSTAV VON PLESSIN.”

Having accomplished this letter, and placed within it that of Adalbert, Gustav desired the surgeon to write a few lines to the young count, his friend, and tell him precisely the state he was in, and his own opinion of his prospect of recovery.

“ Speak the truth to him and to me ; then

oblige me by carrying these letters to the post. They will be more expeditious than I could be, though they may not effectually perform my mission."

With a groan he suffered himself to be conveyed to his chamber.

The surgeon glanced at the superscription of the letter.

"To a lady, I see. The coolest and most prudent will be as mad and madder than the more hairbrained and youthful on those occasions. But he shan't die. No, no; now I have brought him to reason, he shan't die. He had a sharp twinge or two in the carriage, I fancy. Wholesome admonishers! Had I not better bid Adalbert tell this Mademoiselle Leonore that he shan't die, that he has a skilful practitioner with him, who will bring him through it, though the fever does run prodigiously high certainly? No; silence I have ever found the best policy. *We* can't help seeing and knowing a great deal, but no one is obliged to us if we make him aware that we do so."

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Un sol piacer non v'è
Che quando mio si fa
Non sia dolore!”

METASTASIO.

“HERE are two letters for you, Leonore,” exclaimed Nadine gaily. “Who this correspondent can be I cannot imagine, post-mark and all so strange; and the other puzzles me even more—you will never guess who writes it,” she said, holding a letter from Adalbert before Leonore’s eyes.

She dropped it into her lap, and left her alone, while she returned to the perusal of four sheets, crossed and recrossed, from Paris. Leonore broke the seal of Adalbert’s letter before she even cast a look of curiosity on the other. It was brief:

“I write with reluctance to tell my Leonore that I must be a promise-breaker. I shall not

be at Lichtenthal to-morrow; but do not reproach me, dearest Leonore, no, not by one hasty flash of your dark eye. A friend—the one I most value and esteem in the world—is dangerously ill, and desires to see me. So writes the surgeon who is with him. Can I do otherwise than fly to his side? My own heart answers no; and if it speaks thus when I ardently desire to be with you, how can I doubt that it speaks truly? Write to me instantly at ——. Whatever grief awaits me there, let there be this drop of balm in the cup. More I dare not tarry to say, yet can I not but thank and bless you anew for the sensations of bliss which now fill my heart.”

This letter cost Leonore tears; some were of disappointment, and sprang from a misgiving that now one circumstance, now another, would come between her and happiness. She thought, too, that Adalbert was afflicted, and she breathed a prayer for the friend beside whom he was watching. At length she took up the other letter, and regarded it with some curiosity, so unknown to her was the handwriting. She looked at the post mark; it was the name of the town to which Adalbert had bid her write. She opened it with breathless anxiety, expecting she

knew not what. An inclosed letter fell from it ; she snatched it from the ground, and recognised Adalbert's handwriting. In a moment she conjectured that he had written to her a second time, and sent the letter accidentally to his friend. Her cheek was dyed with blushes at the supposition. She turned to the envelope, and glanced her eye over it. It was impossible to misunderstand the few forcible lines which it contained ; yet she felt bewildered, pressed her hand to her heart, breathed quickly, and gazing on Adalbert's letter, did not dare to make herself acquainted with its contents. Rallying from this weakness, and desirous to be without interruption, she rose, secured the door, resumed her seat, and commenced reading. The letter was dated from one of the towns through which Adalbert must have passed on his road to the capital, a few days previous to his arrival there.

“ Every hour confirms me in the belief that I have wisely decided that before my twenty-first birthday I will know whether I am shackled or free. I could not endure the continuance of the torment which for the last three years has been increasing. The only relief that I have known has been derived from your judicious friendship ; let me, then, cling to it in a moment which

decides my fate in life. I cannot disguise from myself that the approaching crisis is all-important. If I am free, I have before me, as my mother delights to represent, a career as promising as that of any young man of my rank in ——. Royal favour would not be slow to comply with the solicitations of the elder members of my family for my advancement. But if honour exact the fulfilment of my boyish vows I know no one who can less anticipate the gifts of fortune. I am certain that I shall irretrievably offend and alienate all my relations. There is not one but will consider himself authorised to consider my choice a personal insult ; nor do I deny that I can scarcely assert a right thus to sully the blood of our race. To continue to reside at court under such treatment as both myself and my wife would be exposed to, would be to me impossible. Admission there would be refused to her ; private circles only could receive her, and perhaps even those would be closed. When I think how my mother will be affected by this overthrow of all the prospects that have gilded her widowed life, and by a return for her devotion to my interests which she will deem deeply ungrateful, I confess I feel remorse. Nor is this the only thought which wrings my

heart, round which there lingers so much of the romantic fondness of my childhood for my lovely playmate, that if I find that she has clung with constancy to the hope of the realisation of my youthful projects, I never can inflict on her the pang of the merest suspicion that I have since viewed with regret the chain I then so passionately embraced. If she *desire* me to be true she shall find me so ; but if her beauty, her accomplishments, be half so brilliant as they are said to be, they would entitle her to a far more prosperous lot than I can confer. With me she can share only penury and seclusion. I have the bitter feeling that I may have marred her happiness, but that it will never be in my power to make it. You will ask why I recapitulate for the hundredth time all the disadvantages and miseries which impend over such a union. Throughout my journey they have presented themselves to me at every turn, and it relieves my full heart thus to communicate them. Adieu, my best and wisest friend. You shall hear from me constantly the progress of this affair. In any new difficulty I must consult you afresh. Would that you were at my side !”

CHAPTER XIX.

“And do not seek to take your change upon you,
To bear your griefs yourself, and leave me out.”

SHAKESPEARE.

NADINE expected that Leonore would seek her, and once or twice she suspended the reading of her letter to wonder why she did not appear. At length it was finished; it contained many kind messages from Madame de Fleury to Leonore, and Nadine went to repeat them to her; but she found the door of the chamber fastened, and no reply was given to her call. Somewhat alarmed, she went out on a terrace which ran along the front of that wing of the building, and finding one of the windows of the room open, easily stepped into it. Leonore had fallen back on the couch on which she had left her, in a state of utter insensibility; her face, her lips, her hands, were colourless as marble. Nadine sprang towards her in terror. One of Adalbert's letters was on

her lap, the hand having evidently relaxed its hold as she fainted. Two other letters were on the ground. Nadine snatched a scent bottle from the table, and poured its contents on her forehead. She rang hastily for their attendant. As she heard her approaching footsteps she remembered that the closed door and the scattered letters might expose Leonore to vulgar comments ; she gathered up the latter and thrust them under the pillow of the sofa, then flew to the former, and unfastened it ere the hand of Hortense was on it.

“ Mademoiselle Körner is ill ; she has fainted. I am quite alarmed to see her so long insensible,” she exclaimed hurriedly.

It was some time before their united efforts recalled poor Leonore to life. The moment she gave signs of animation Nadine dispatched Hortense in search of some new remedy, in order that she only might hear the first words that should escape her friend’s lips.

Leonore opened her large dark eyes with an expression of such utter woe that Nadine, pierced to the heart, clasped her in her arms, and exclaimed :

“ For God’s sake, Leonore, tell me what ails thee !”

Leonore spoke not, but raised herself on her elbow, and gazed wildly round; then, pressing her hands to her forehead, said in a low voice:

"I wish I could; I cannot remember. Why, why this misery?" Her eye fell on the envelope of a letter; she started violently. "Where are they?" she exclaimed.

"I have them," replied Nadine.

"Do not let her come," cried Leonore, for she heard Hortense's step.

Nadine hastened to the door, and dismissing the attendant, secured it, and returned to Leonore. She had thrown herself on the cushion, burying her face on her arm, and wept in agony. Nadine bent over her.

"My dearest, my more than sister——"

"Leave me, only leave me," said Leonore, in a voice choking with emotion.

"Leave you! Say anything but that, Leonore," replied the young countess, bursting into tears.

Leonore regarded her with impatience. She could not see her sorrow, and bestow no thought on her; yet did her own intensity of anguish press too heavily for her to be able to endure to have any other consideration forced on her at that moment.

“ Oh ! ” she exclaimed, as if in anger, “ am I not miserable enough that I must also see your tears ? Go from me—forget me ; do not weep for me, I implore.”

Nadine threw herself on her knees beside her, took both her hands in hers, and said :

“ Oh, Leonore ! think not of me, speak not of me. Only let me stay by your side, in silence if you wish ; I will not even weep.”

Leonore turned away, strove to withdraw her hands, but Nadine still clasped them for a moment, then gently released them, and sank on the ground at her side. There Leonore continued to lie, almost like a beautiful statue chiselled for a tomb, her eyes closed, her lips apart. At intervals an expression of heart-breaking anguish rested on her face ; a large tear forced its way through her long eyelashes ; and a crimson flush suffused her brow, cheek, and neck, fading away again to deathlike pallor. And Nadine, in obedience to her promise, watched by her silently, and did not even weep.

She had seen Leonore in grief before—not in such grief as this, but still enough to know that its effect always was to strike her dumb ; that her tears were few, or else were poured out in a flood of violence which seemed to shake her with

agony; then almost immediately her manner would regain a strange composure, her tone become measured and subdued, and seeming to dread lest expressions of sympathy should unnerve her, she repressed rather than encouraged them.

At length Leonore attempted to speak, but her voice failed. Nadine made no remark on her hesitation, but waited silently for her to recover herself.

"The Count Adalbert comes not hither to-morrow, Nadine," she said.

This morning Leonore called him Adalbert, and in a tone how different!

"Why not, dearest?" inquired Nadine faintly, her fears confirmed. He had written to declare the decided opposition of his haughty family to all their hopes of happiness.

"Where are those letters?" asked Leonore in a whisper.

Nadine gave them to her. She looked at them, striving even sternly for composure; she selected the first which she had read, and put it into Nadine's hand. It was calculated to awaken hope, but in this she dared not indulge; Leonore's manner, as she hastily placed before her Adalbert's second letter without a comment, dispelled every such emotion. While Nadine perused it her

countenance clouded over with extreme grief and disappointment, mingled as it were with shame. She read slowly, and without daring to raise her eyes. Suddenly she exclaimed :

“ Ah ! no sooner did he see and know you than all these weak fears were dispelled.”

Leonore put Colonel Von Plessin's envelope into her hand, and said, pointing to Adalbert's letters :

“ What think you the sage adviser there consulted would say were these two letters before him ? This is the sober dictate of reason, that the mere folly of passion.”

“ Not so,” replied Nadine with tears. “ This is the native language of a warm and generous heart, that the sordid wisdom taught him by the worldly.”

Nadine, as she read, could not help wishing that this very judicious friend had broken his neck in his fall. “ And Adalbert is gone to drink in his poison,” she thought.

Leonore bent down her head on Nadine's shoulder and said :

“ I have one deep regret. Would that I had been permitted to see that letter before I ever told him that I loved him !” And she hid her burning blushes on Nadine's neck.

"Ah ! do not for a moment believe that he who hath heard such an avowal from your lips can have his constancy lightly shaken."

Leonore raised her stately head.

"Can you imagine that I will ever be the wife of the writer of that letter ?" Then, in a softened voice, she added : "Does not love itself, if disinterested, forbid it ?"

"No, no," exclaimed Nadine impetuously. "Blessed with your love, he will be a thousand times more happy, a thousand times more worthy than his former advisers would ever make him."

Leonore shook her head.

"Now, once more, for your sake and mine, I say leave me, dearest Nadine, leave me a while ; and I trust," she said solemnly, "that you will not take one step that can affect me without my knowledge. Promise this."

"I will," replied Nadine sadly ; and kissing Leonore's cheek she withdrew.

CHAPTER XX.

"I sat, my being blended in one thought,
(Thought was it, aspiration, or resolve?)
Absorbed.—

And when I rose I found myself in prayer."

COLERIDGE.

It was after the lapse of many hours that Leonore sent to beg the Countess Nadine to return to her chamber. Nadine was deeply affected when she saw how very ill Leonore looked; but the calmness of her manner awed her, and, besides, she suppressed her own emotions that she might not heighten her friend's suffering. Leonore rose to meet her, but had scarcely advanced a few steps when she was forced to lay her hand on the table for support. Nadine sprang to her side, led her back to her seat, and placing herself beside her, held her tenderly in her arms. Leonore shed a few tears, but wiped them away;

then, taking up two unfolded letters, she placed them in Nadine's hand, whispering :

"Read them, dearest ; I would have you read them."

Nadine obeyed, though her eyes were soon so blinded with tears that she could scarcely proceed to the end of her painful task. She saw that the letters were addressed to Colonel Von Plessin and to Adalbert, and her interest for her cousin impelled her to read the one to him first.

"WHEN you prevailed with me to hear your pleadings I told you that I would not have you blind to the evils which beset such a union as you proposed, but I listened to your gainsaying of all my arguments, till I believed that you esteemed them lightly, and that I might hold them outweighed by other considerations. I endeavoured to represent them as they had appeared to me in calmer moments ; but I did not draw a picture forcible as that which is the work of your own hand, which to-day I have steadily contemplated, and which I refuse ever to realise. Duty and affection alike forbid it. When can I make known to you this determination better than at the moment when you are at the side of

the friend who can counsel you so well? Write to me neither to thank nor to upbraid: even if you should be disposed to do the latter, I pray you forbear. If you suffer for the present acutely, you will hereafter rejoice that I had the resolution to inflict the salutary wound.

“LEONORE KÖRNER.”

Within this letter Leonore placed that of Adalbert to Colonel Von Plessin. To him she wrote as follows :

“THIS morning I received your letter, and that of Count Adalbert Von Lichtenthal. Only one consequence could result from my perusal of them—an immovable decision never to accept his proffered hand. He has requested me to write to —, and I have done so, in order to acquaint him with the total change which has taken place in our position since we parted; and to him I have returned the letter which was once his, as the sole justification and explanation of the step I am taking. I will not revoke my plighted faith without this distinct declaration of the cause. Whether your revelation of it involves a breach of confidence on your part is

for you to decide. I confess that, since the first impulse which urged me to its perusal, I have doubted whether I ought to have read a letter not addressed to me without first obtaining the permission of the writer. You will use all your endeavours to calm, to convince your friend. Above all, make him sensible that no alteration can ever take place in the sentiments of

“LEONORE KÖRNER.”

“Are you quite prepared to send these letters, Leonore?” asked Nadine faintly.

“Quite,” replied Leonore decidedly. “Oh, Nadine, not a word, not a look to unnerve me! You know that I ought to send them. But would you have them changed in aught?”

Nadine did not answer. In her heart she would have had that to Adalbert much less decided, that to Colonel Von Plessin even more severe. Leonore did not wish to alter them. She did not trust Nadine as a very safe guide, and she longed to hurry to the completion of all that she deemed required of her by rectitude and dignity. Leonore had always been accustomed to decide for herself and for Nadine; therefore it is not surprising that she had already come to a firm determination before she spoke to her.

When she hesitated, it was only because she was collecting strength to avow her resolve, not because she was wavering in it.

"Will you send them for me," she continued, interpreting her friend's silence as a negative to her inquiry, "and then return to me? But stop! It will be time for us to go into the chapel."

The chaplain of the countess assembled the household there every evening.

"You look too ill for so much exertion," said Nadine, in a tone of surprise and entreaty.

"Too ill!" murmured Leonore. "No, no; not too ill to bear my sickness to the foot of the cross. I have passed most of this day in prayer, Nadine, or I should not have strength to address you thus. Let me go where more balm will be poured into this bruised heart."

Nadine felt no inclination to expostulate further. She dispatched the letters, and returned to Leonore, whose thoughts, during her absence, had wandered to Wilhelmine and to Sister Joanna, and had recalled her injunction to them to pray for her; she trusted that this day had not passed without their compliance with it.

"Nadine," said Leonore, detaining her ere

they quitted the chamber, "dearest, when all are gone forth tarry a while with me in the chapel this night, and let us look back on the years that we have known and loved each other. Let us thank God for our joys; let us implore His blessing on our sorrows; let us beseech His pardon for the errors, voluntary and involuntary, into which we have fallen——"

"Leonore," exclaimed Nadine with terror, "you are bidding me farewell!"

Leonore made no answer, but she clasped Nadine to her bosom, and impressed one long, long kiss on her lips. She led her on towards the chapel.

Sad, but tasting, even in the freshness of their grief, somewhat of the sweetness of the heart's acquiescence when it can say,

"Take me from the thrall
Of passionate hopes—be Thou my All in All,"

the two friends, who had seen all the occupants of the chapel withdraw, and had tarried within it till the dusk of evening was dissipated by the soft moonbeams, stood beneath the old grey walls of the house of God.

"Nadine," said Leonore, in a voice which

she could not elevate above a whisper, and pointing to the intendant's house, which they saw among the trees, "if he come to seek me—but no, he will not—yet, if he does, he shall find me there."

CHAPTER XXI.

“Every dearest tie,
Loved faces and loved scenes, youth’s friendships gone.”
Thoughts in Past Years.

NADINE’S morning thoughts were all inspired by hope. She was convinced that Adalbert did love Leonore, and that, although he had wavered formerly, he would not waver now.

“He will experience no relapse,” she exclaimed; “our return has recalled him completely to himself. The sentiments instilled into him during our absence were wholly foreign to his own ardent nature; the path marked out for him is one no generous, noble heart like his can ever consent to tread. The accomplishment of Leonore’s happiness is a duty sacred to him and to me, for on us would the guilt of its destruction rest. That we both erred I begin to recognise; we have now to cope with the difficulties which we have brought into existence. It would be a

new and a darker sin to fly before them—to let them fall on her alone, and crush her in the dust. Surely, surely we are neither of us capable of this, self-loving as we have been !”

The determination which Leonore had declared on the preceding evening was more repugnant to Nadine, as she now recalled it, than it had been when first revealed to her. Then pity had suggested no better mode of alleviating her sorrows than a prompt compliance with whatever wish she framed, and the generosity which ever prompted Nadine to self-sacrifice forbade her to oppose a plan which inflicted so severe a wound on her own heart. But with the renewed strength of morning she more clearly perceived all the consequences of the step which Leonore proposed, and more than suspected the designs which prompted it.

“If Leonore return to her relations, how greatly will she increase the difficulties which beset poor Adalbert !” she reflected with a sigh. “It will be a thousand times more intolerable to our proud relations if he bring her from such a home than if he seek her in my castle, of which she has ever been the ornament. Yet I dare not urge this consideration upon her. I do not think it would have the weight I desire.”

Nadine's misgiving was just. Leonore had passed the greater part of the night in meditations very different from those that filled the mind of her young patroness. Her wounded feelings scarcely allowed her to know the wish that Adalbert should overcome difficulties which he had so plainly foreseen. A chasm yawned between them, which she now scarcely desired to see filled, though filled it might be, like the gulf of old, would each be content to cast into it what each most valued—she her womanly dignity, her uncompromising truth; he his pride of birth, the affection of his family, the gratifications of ambition. Leonore did not condemn Adalbert's letter bitterly or severely; but she condemned his want of candour to herself, and no longer believed that she could render him happy enough to forget all the sacrifices which he enumerated in it. She felt that she was blameless with regard to Adalbert, though she had betrayed herself. As a child she had combated his wishes, as a woman she had never made any one attempt to establish her sway over him. In the concealment of her own deep feeling she had exercised a fortitude which cost her pangs, from the very remembrance of which she recoiled. He sought her, and the first words by which she replied to the passionate

avowal of his love were those of warning. She spoke of his mother's pride. "When had she ever known it refuse to yield to her affection for him?" She spoke of her own poverty. "Nadine had removed it." She spoke of his self-respect. "Never would it be so well founded as when he should have won her for his bride." How many times had Leonore repeated to herself all these replies with thrilling delight; and now she knew not how much of truth was in them, even in the moment of their utterance. She knew not whether he would not quickly reconcile himself to the revocation of her consent, esteeming his honour satisfied without the sacrifice of his interest. She resolved that she would not linger for a day where he might suppose that she lingered for him. She would immediately return to her own home, her own relatives; she would resume the dress of her own class, and its avocations.

Nadine read in her friend's countenance that she retained her resolve, and Leonore's first words were but a resuming of the preceding night's conversation.

"The bitter reflections of twenty-four hours, dear Nadine," she said, "have convinced me of many realities to which I can never close my eyes again. Every truth ought to have an in-

fluence on our conduct. The separation of belief and action is unnatural, and I have never made it without feeling a self-reproaching conscience within. May Heaven preserve me from ever attempting it again ! I see now plainly that which I have at intervals painfully suspected : the position which I occupy is so utterly false that I cannot continue to fill it either with honour or peace. The endeavour has been fraught with difficulty and suffering to others and to myself."

"You mean that you account me the cause of all your misery," exclaimed Nadine, bursting into tears. "You cannot reproach me as I have of late reproached myself; but I thought to atone for all the evil which I had brought on you by endowing you with my wealth, and uniting you to Adalbert."

Leonore for a few moments made no reply; then, throwing her arms round Nadine, she said in tones intensely earnest :

"No, no, I will never know a feeling but of gratitude toward you. Do not doubt this—do not fear. To be sorely tried tempts the weak and the vehement—and both am I—to many wrong thoughts and acts; but the evil spirit will never prevail with me to sin such a sin as that. I feel that there he is powerless." And she raised

her eyes to heaven with a look of rejoicing confidence which could not fail to communicate itself to Nadine, and eased her heart for ever from a torturing dread. Leonore continued : " I would say to you only that you have attempted that which is, and perhaps ought to be, impossible ; and well had it been for both of us had those who had more knowledge and experience forced us to recognise and obey this truth earlier in life. That lesson must be learned now, and its first teaching is to return at once to my real station and my own kindred."

" Believe me, Leonore," replied Nadine, in trembling accents of grief and fear, " this is now too late. This will bring no cure to past evil ; it only renders it impossible to find any remedy for our present misery. It realises all that is now imaginary—all that we most dread, and that our enemies most desire. You cannot think that I would now oppose you in aught that was for your good."

" Not now, nor ever intentionally ; but surely you must feel with me that we have both been grievously mistaken. The step I propose hath its purpose—a deep purpose. No other can so effectually convince the Count Adalbert of the sincerity of my declarations, and of the

insurmountable obstacles which lie between us."

"You love him, and yet you assist to raise them!" cried Nadine despairingly.

"If you have any love for him or for me, forbid me not to advance boldly in a path so plain before me, rugged though it be," replied Leonore, with that loftiness of mien which had often silenced Nadine's expostulations, and strengthened both her love and admiration for her friend. "A few words will prepare my kinswoman to receive me," continued Leonore, throwing a shawl round her shoulders as if to depart.

All that the affection and pity of Nadine could now suggest for the alleviation of Leonore's anguish was a ready compliance with whatever wish she should express.

"I may come with you, my Leonore?" she asked. "Believe me, dearest, we owe it to each other and to ourselves to prove that our friendship is unbroken, our mutual confidence and esteem unchanged. If you quit my castle I must give evidence that I sanction your withdrawal, and that your reasons for such a proceeding spring from no petty caprice, no unworthy dissension. I will come with you, and Frau Körner shall

receive you as much at my request as your own."

Leonore pressed her friend's hand in silence. She had wound herself up to do everything without support. She was surprised at the power of exertion which Nadine suddenly showed. It unnerved her, it weakened her; yet she would neither deny her friend the gratification of seeking still to serve her, nor was she blind to the force of the arguments which, as her patroness, she employed. They set out together to the intendant's house. Nadine advanced to meet Frau Körner.

"Leonore has persuaded me to leave her with you while I return to ——. I can ill spare her," she said with a sweet, sad smile, "but I cannot gainsay her in aught. You must remember that we two maidens have never had any yet to cross us, and you must be very kind to her till I come back. My good Frau Körner, you must understand that everything that is done for Leonore Körner is done for Nadine Von Lichtenthal. The gratitude your kindness shall excite in her will be felt in the same degree by me."

Frau Körner heard this speech with an air of bewilderment; but her apparent want of comprehension arose partly from her mind being busily

engaged in considering how she could best turn to account professions which she supposed to mean that the young countess would pay handsomely for every whim which it should please Leonore to indulge. Leonore saved her from the necessity of framing a reply by calling for one which it was much more easy for her to give.

"The chamber which you said I might occupy, is it already prepared? Can I enter it now?"

"O yes, when you please. I made Margaret wash it and dust it the day that you were here and spoke of it. Indeed, I have ever expected you since then."

Nadine cast a half-reproachful look on Leonore; but checking herself she turned away and sighed. Leonore took her hand:

"Come," she said, "let us look at it;" and they entered a very humble, scantily furnished apartment. Leonore led Nadine to the window, and said in a voice which sank into a whisper ere she concluded the sentence: "I can see the castle from here, dearest."

Nadine hastily turned and closed the door behind them; and then, locked in each other's arms, the two friends wept long and unrestrainedly.

"I will return with you now," said Leonore

at length, "to collect the few things which I need——"

"Many," replied Nadine, "to make this abode tolerable; but I cannot bear to think of it as more than a temporary one."

Leonore made no reply, and scarcely a word passed their lips as they returned through the wood to the castle. When they came within sight of the entrance they perceived a travelling carriage drawn up before it, and recognised the liveries of the Countess Justine's domestics. Both stopped short with looks of pain and annoyance.

"I cannot accompany you further," said Leonore, turning, if possible, paler than before.

"No, indeed, you cannot," replied Nadine without hesitation.

"Yet I do not like to send you to that proud, cruel woman alone. I am her offender, her enemy; I ought to meet her bitterness and wrath."

"Ah! fear nothing for me; I shall silence and disarm her, though not with her own weapons. My kinswoman never altogether forgets who I am, though she sometimes betrays her contempt for what I am. Fear nothing for me," continued Nadine, drawing Leonore towards

her, and kissing her tenderly ; her face beamed with such love and gentleness, there was such a sweet composure in her tone, that Leonore did not fear, but believed that she would quell even the fierce storm of pride and anger. " Besides," she thought, as she retraced her path alone, "there is little now to appease. The victim is already offered."

She walked on in deep meditation. She quickened her steps as if she had some purpose that she was impatient to execute. As soon as she reached the house she sought Margaret, and requested her in an earnest voice to follow her to her chamber.

"Margaret," she said, "my good maiden, will you show me a kindness? Then bring me your dress that you have for festivals. I want to try it on. We are nearly of a height. I will purchase it of you, or give you anything in exchange that you would like to have. Only bring it without delay. Is it here or at home?"

"At home," replied Margaret in much amazement ; "but I could fetch it in half an hour, if that were all. I cannot guess why you should need it; yet indeed, dear Fräulein, I would do that or anything to pleasure you."

"Thanks, Margaret, thanks ; there is nothing

I so much desire as what I now ask, and that speedily. Go, I pray you."

Margaret departed, for she had always loved Leonore, and as she went she repeated to herself more than once: "Is she really coming back to be one of us?"

"Here, Fräulein, I am returned," said Margaret in a low voice, and tapping gently at Leonore's door; and entering, she placed her bundle on the floor. The girl's smiling alacrity and willingness to oblige her might have caused Leonore at another time sensations of pleasure, but now she felt only the more sad as she gazed on her happy, broad, comely countenance.

"Fasten the door, Margaret, and you shall help me to try these things on," said Leonore.

Margaret was above the common height, and by no means ill formed. She displayed with a little pride the handsome dress which was seldom worn, and was as yet untarnished and in all its beauty—"good enough for a wedding dress," she said, adding, with a blush and a smile that contradicted her declaration, that it would be long ere she should need one for that purpose.

"Here, Fräulein," she said, "is the corset; it is of damask. Is it not handsome? Nothing pleases me so well as this gold embroidery on

black; but first you must put on the petticoat. My aunt sent me this. In her country all the Catholics wear this crimson, and my purple silk apron goes well with it, does it not? The silk handkerchief for your neck must be folded so; and this silver necklace fastens in front. Now for your white sleeves—don't you love them so large?—and then you must seat yourself, and I will place the *Rechte Haube* on the back of your head. I need not alter your nice smooth hair. How it shines, and how black it is! The silver cap will indeed look beautiful on it."

And Margaret, as she completed Leonore's toilette, clapped her hands and laughed with delight.

"You are beautiful," she exclaimed. "If you could but see yourself in one of those large mirrors that are at the castle!"

The harsh sound of Frau Körner's voice calling Margaret seemed not half so grating to Leonore's ear as the merry accents of her light-hearted attendant.

"I must go," said Margaret with regret, looking back and laughing as she went. "How surprised they will be! They will not know you."

Karl was indeed astonished when, at their

evening meal, Leonore appeared in her newly adopted costume. He, too, exclaimed inwardly: "Thou art beautiful—more beautiful than ever; but how pale, how sad!" He could not fathom his cousin's purpose any more than Margaret, and he repeated as she had done: "Is she really coming back to be one of us?"

CHAPTER XXII.

"J'ai commencé ; je vais poursuivre mon ouvrage."

RACINE.

THE arrival of the Countess Justine at the Schloss was indeed a grievous occurrence to Nadine, but she had promptly decided on the line of conduct which she would pursue, and she trusted to persevere in her intention. Respect for a relative who was much her senior, and the desire not to exasperate one who had so much influence over the fates of her cousin and her friend, made her resolve to draw a veil over the unwillingness with which she received her within her castle, and to decline entering into conversation with her on a topic on which they must so widely disagree, and which they could not discuss to any practical purpose. Supported by this determination, she went to receive her, and read at once on her countenance that she was restraining, and that

but for a few moments, the ebullition of extreme wrath. Willing to ward off the storm, Nadine proposed to the Countess Justine to make a selection of the chamber which she would like to occupy during her stay at the castle, and led her through the rambling old building by as circuitous a route as she could devise. At length, however, the choice was made, and the Countess Justine stopped Nadine abruptly, as she proposed to withdraw, and without any preliminary remarks exclaimed in a wrathful tone :

“ Your cousin Adalbert left me to go to Colonel Von Plessin, who, I believe, is dying ; and this I know is the only reason why I do not find him here. In that case I should be a still more unwelcome guest than I feel myself at this moment. Do not, my dear cousin, suppose that I am at all ignorant of the plots which have been woven under this roof ; and do not think that the generalship of two young ladies just arrived from Paris, and of a youth just withdrawn from the *Pagerie*, is skilful enough to defeat all that older heads may plan with due deference to the interests and position of a noble family. But why have I not seen Mademoiselle Körner ? This is new and strange indeed. How do you feel when she is two hours from your side ? ”

"She is gone to stay with her relations for a short time," said Nadine rather faintly.

"Indeed!" cried the Countess Justine, with all the scorn in voice and countenance which Nadine expected the communication to inspire. "Then now it is time for you and for me to make acquaintance with those who are to be our nearest kin so soon."

Without observing this taunt, Nadine spoke, gently as before, but with a firmness and dignity that astonished her angry cousin, and imposed a salutary restraint on her.

"Madame," she said, "I must at once make you a request, which I trust will meet with compliance during your stay at Lichtenthal. I do not wish to speak with you of Adalbert or Leonore again. My cousin has nearly arrived at that age when it is his privilege and his duty to reflect and to decide for himself. He has no friend who desires more sincerely than I that he may do both wisely and conscientiously. I believe that he loves Leonore most deeply. I do not think that, having once loved her, he can transfer his affections to any other woman, or be happy separated from her. I have never known her equal. You are convinced that I desire this marriage, and that I have taken steps to promote it.

Remember, madame, that my future disposal of my fortune will be uncontrolled, and that, in bestowing part of it on Leonore, I perform a simple act of justice—one which I always contemplated when I placed her in a new position in life, and disqualified her for that from which I took her. Besides, I owe her a debt of gratitude. The very continuance of my existence probably is in consequence of her devotion.”

“I must see Mademoiselle Körner herself,” replied the Countess Justine haughtily. “As to your request, I willingly accede to it. This is a subject too unworthy to be permitted long to engage my thoughts or trouble my peace.” She no longer opposed Nadine’s wish to withdraw.

When the Countess Justine re-appeared in the evening she requested Nadine with formality to send a domestic to Mademoiselle Körner, to make known her wish to see her the following morning.

“Certainly,” replied Nadine, without embarrassment; and approaching her writing table, she wrote these lines :

“To-morrow, dearest Leonore, the Countess Justine wishes to see you. This seems to be the purpose which has brought her to Lichtenthal.

You are not unprepared. Do not let her lead you rashly to compromise your happiness, and the happiness which you prize beyond your own. Tell me if there is anything you would have me do, or if you would see me. I have declined all conversation on this subject with my cousin.

"Thy friend,

"NADINE."

"I AM glad," was Leonore's reply, "that the Countess Justine has come hither, and that we shall meet. It will be best for us both. You have done wisely, dearest, to decline altercation with her. She can never regulate your conduct, nor influence your sentiments. She has no authority to constrain the first, nor do you esteem her well enough for her to affect the last. At the same time, her age and her position exact reverence. Adieu! You are always to me all and everything I could desire. Do not try to see me until this interview is over.

"LEONORE."

"Leonore will be here at the hour you have named," said Nadine, having read her note.

"Allow me to receive her in the library," replied the Countess Justine stiffly, "and if it

please you, I will now retire. For many days I have known nothing but fatigue and annoyance—the fatigue of opposing folly, the annoyance of seeing others act unworthily.”

At the appointed hour Leonore arrived at the castle, and was conducted by the servant to the library, which she found unoccupied. She still wore the costume of Margaret, and the Countess Justine, who did not recognise her as she first entered, and started with surprise on doing so, could not help acknowledging inwardly that she had never seen her look more beautiful or more majestic. Maintaining an air of haughty defiance, she scarcely returned Leonore’s modest salutation, but, passing her by, took a seat on a sofa, and waved her hand to a lower one for the peasant girl, who, calmly awaiting her commencement of the conversation, saw that her silent dignity embarrassed the noble lady not a little. At length the Countess Justine spoke :

“The reason of my requesting this interview with you can be no mystery ; it is but a mother’s part to send for you, and to inform you that the foolish passion of a boy is not to be allowed to inflict a deadly wound on the honour and prospects of a young man of the rank and high birth of my son. I would acquaint you with facts to

which probably your own ambition blinds you, and which will not be fairly placed before you by a love-sick youth or a visionary girl like your patroness. I would tell you that, far from being alarmed at my son's projects, I deride them, knowing that there is no danger of their ever being carried into execution. Not only his own large and powerful family, but all the nobility of — would immediately join with me in protesting against the insult offered to their class; nor should I want the support of royalty itself in the vindication of our honour. I speak from compassion and consideration for you; and could I have conceived that folly and presumption could reach such a height, I might have given a timelier warning."

This torrent of words Leonore had more than once attempted to check, but in vain. Anticipating only self-justifying and opposing arguments, the Countess Justine would not suspend her speech to hear anything that Leonore desired to say; but at length want of breath constrained her to pause, and Leonore, rising, addressed her:

"I am sorry, madame, that you have not permitted me sooner to spare you so much exertion on a subject which has lost all claim to your attention. Two days have elapsed since I

wrote to your son to decline the offer of his hand, being convinced that the acceptance of it would not finally contribute to his happiness or to my own. Allow me to tranquillise your mind by assuring you that no solicitations on his part can have the result of changing this determination."

Before the countess had sufficiently rallied from her amazement at this announcement to make any reply, Leonore was gone. The first words that broke from the Countess Justine's lips, on finding herself alone, were :

"What insolence ! Shall such a girl as that have it in her power to speak of refusing my son ?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Thy love is better than high birth to me."

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Count Adalbert reached the side of his friend he found that the fever, which had gained a considerable height at the time of the surgeon's dispatch to summon him, had been happily subdued, and was now succeeded by the weakness and languor consequent on it. For many reasons both Colonel Von Plessin and Adalbert readily obeyed the injunctions of the surgeon not to attempt to enter into discourse. Gustav was rejoiced to see his young and impetuous friend removed from the seat of danger, and at his side; and having placed the decision of the future in Leonore's hands he felt that he owed silence to her until she acquainted him with what her conduct would be. Rest and alleviation from anxiety aided the watchful care of Adalbert and

the exertions of the surgeon's skill, and every hour seemed to produce some amendment in the patient. It was, therefore, rather with satisfaction than dread that the surgeon, on the second morning after Adalbert's arrival, returned from a neighbouring town with letters which he had ridden there to seek, and among which he perceived one to each gentleman directed by the same hand, and that evidently a woman's.

"Ah! this is Mademoiselle Leonore's reply, no doubt," he said. "I trust it will prove a cordial. Poor lady! how anxious she must be! This epistle to Adalbert is to entreat him not to lose sight of Gustav, but to do for him all she could do were she present; and this to Gustav is full of tender sentiments and fond regrets. Well, I must say I should have judged Adalbert a more fitting object of a lady's favour."

After these cogitations the surgeon placed the letters in Adalbert's hand, saying with a smile that he saw no reason why his patient should be denied the sight of them. Adalbert's curiosity was violently excited by the same observation which had been so pleasantly descanted on by the surgeon. He gave Leonore's letter into Gustav's hand with a look which promised a future demand of explanation, and, moving to a little distance,

impatiently broke the seal of his own. He read the brief contents in a moment; glanced at his own letter, which had fallen from the envelope; strode back to Gustav's bed, regarding with looks of indescribable fury the fancied friend in whom he beheld a betrayer; then seeming to consider, as he gazed on his pale cheek and sunken eye, how impossible it was to challenge him as an adversary, wrath changed into disappointment and scorn, and he darted from the room without the utterance of a word. Gustav, easily understanding the cause of this indignation, half dismayed by the excess of it, but pertinaciously adhering to his old opinions, and rejoicing in Leonore's adoption of them, lay there not sorry to owe it to his illness that he should be spared the first ebullitions of his friend's wrath. He turned again to Leonore's letter. Its firmness and composure struck him, and made her prompt decision much more remarkable than it would have been if made with vehemence.

"Is her understanding convinced?" he asked, "or is her womanly pride" ("dignity," suggested conscience) "piqued? Or is the sacrifice, after all, not a great one?" Gustav would willingly have turned to this last suggestion of a worldly, suspicious spirit to put an end to a smarting sensa-

tion about his heart; but ere the lapse of half an hour his thoughts were disturbed by the violent gallop of a horse, which seemed to start from the court of the little inn he occupied. The question instantly occurred: "Is it, can it be Adalbert?" He called feebly; no one replied. He roused himself and stepped from his bed, he caught the bell, rang it, and, fainting from exertion, fell across the foot of his bed as he regained it. There he was found by the surgeon and his servant.

"Where is Count Adalbert?" he asked when he re-opened his eyes. "I insist upon knowing," he added, perceiving that the surgeon had assumed an air of mystery which was insufferable.

Adalbert's servant was in the background.

"Where is your master?" demanded Colonel Von Plessin.

"He ordered me to saddle his horse, and he sprang on its back the moment it was ready."

"And what did he say?"

"Nothing."

"And which road did he take?"

"The same by which he came."

"Enough, enough," said Colonel Von Plessin impatiently.

Count Adalbert urged his good steed as far as it could carry him ; then mounting a fresh one, he never rested, day or night, till the turrets of Lichtenthal greeted his eyes. He slackened his pace as they came in view ; his heart beat violently. The certainty there awaiting him might be more terrible than the suspense that he was enduring. He would not acknowledge that he already possessed certainty.

“ It is impossible that she can adhere to a decision so mistaken, so barbarous. I will quickly win her from it. How can I fail to do so ? If my happiness is her object, ought she to persist in destroying it, and her own ? I know that she loves me ! ”

With revived hope he gathered up the reins from his horse's neck, set spurs to its sides, and galloped up the avenue. He saw the flag waving from the tower, which announced the presence of the mistress of the Schloss. The first person, however, who met his eyes was a grey-haired domestic of his mother's.

“ What ! Peter,” he exclaimed, in a tone of dissatisfaction, “ you here ! ”

“ Yes ; my lady came two days since,” he answered.

Adalbert rode on through the gateway, very

little pleased with the additional difficulty thus thrown in his way.

"I will make them all know that in a few short days I am my own master," he muttered between his teeth.

He dismounted at the steps to the castle, and ascended to the hall.

"My lady and the Countess Justine are both in the conservatory," said the domestic respectfully.

"And where is Mademoiselle Körner?" demanded Adalbert peremptorily.

"Sir, she is gone to the intendant's. She has been there three or four days now."

"Bring back my horse," called Adalbert, in a voice of thunder, to the man who was leading it to the stables. He sprang on it.

The disturbance occasioned by his arrival had reached the ears of Nadine and his mother, and brought them both to the hall. To their greetings he made no reply. They saw him dash across the park in the direction of the intendant's house. Nadine changed from red to white. The Countess Justine's brow darkened. They both retraced their steps in silence.

"He will not prevail. She cannot be so false and mean after yesterday's discourse," mur-

mured the Countess Justine. "He will not prevail !"

"I fear not," sighed Nadine.

The Countess Justine darted a look of fury at her, and threw herself into a seat in the recess of a window which commanded a view of the course Adalbert had taken. He had already disappeared.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ ‘ Parlez—ne suis-je plus dans votre souvenir? ’ —

‘ Je vous accuse aussi bien moins que la Fortune.

Tel est votre devoir, je l’avoue. Et le mien

Est de vous épargner un si triste entretien.’ ”

RACINE.

THE first person that Adalbert met at the farm was Karl ; he threw the bridle to him with careless authority, sprang from his horse, and entered the house.

“ Where is Leonore? I must see her instantly,” he cried.

“ She is in her chamber,” said Frau Körner, ushering the young count to her parlour with cringing servility.

“ Pray her to pass hither quickly,” commanded Adalbert, and the dame disappeared. In a few moments the door opened, and Leonore, in her peasant’s dress, entered : she was pale as

death. Adalbert hastened to her, and seized her hand.

"Why have you left the castle?" he exclaimed in a voice nearly choked with passion. "My mother has driven you thence. She shall answer to me for this!"

"Not so," said Leonore. "I came hither of my own accord—before her arrival. Have you had no letter from me?"

"No; I cannot, will not believe that the one I received was yours. Be it that this hand wrote it—it was my mother's dictation. Your heart could never frame such falsehood to the love and constancy which you have vowed to me!"

"Indeed," replied Leonore, trembling with emotion; "you, not your mother, dictated it."

"Leonore," cried Adalbert, in accents of touching grief and tenderness, "have some pity on me. You know not how exhausted I am, how fevered is my blood. Have some pity on me!" And he pressed her hand to his burning brow.

"God knows," said the unhappy girl, raising her streaming eyes to heaven, "I have no thought but for your happiness."

"Be it so!" exclaimed Adalbert joyfully. "Consult that, and you are mine."

"Leave me," answered Leonore, "leave me, I implore you, till you are more calm."

"I am calm. Your voice, your words, have laid the storm."

"But you must not mistake them," said Leonore, summoning up resolution, and forcibly withdrawing her hand.

"They admit of no interpretation but one," replied Adalbert sternly.

"They must bear none that is any retractation of the decision declared in my letter."

"Then they are a cruel mockery, such as is your being here, and the dress you wear—all insults heaped upon me!" cried Adalbert, taking two or three angry turns across the narrow room; then, stopping suddenly before Leonore: "It is the pride, Leonore, enthroned on your lofty brow that is speaking, not the love which I believed to be enshrined in your heart. How could love impel you to inflict a chastisement so terrible on an offence committed before I knew you? Years have passed since our childhood, and I confess it is you, as you are now before me, that I love, rather than an image cherished by memory. Did you appear before me now for the first time, you would make me false to the girlish Leonore. How, then, can any doubts, any fancies I had

about her affect the full, unhesitating love I proffer to you? I swear to you that the whole contents of that letter are as little acknowledged by my heart now as if my hand had never traced them. Why then, O why, unless you are moved by pride and a desire of womanly revenge, am I to endure the fatal consequences?"

"You cannot complain," replied Leonore, "if the arguments you there employed are so convincing that they have made a convert of me."

"You are too high-souled for this to be. Those obstacles are such as you would trample under foot."

"I might," said Leonore, "had they been urged by any but yourself. Moreover, you have strengthened my convictions by the very argument you have used to shake them. If your love has been so recently conceived, if your first love had indeed passed away——"

As Leonore uttered these words the door was thrown open, and the Countess Justine, urged by ungovernable irritation and impatience, appeared.

"Undutiful boy!" she exclaimed.

Leonore advanced towards her with a dignity which silenced both her and her impetuous son.

"Madam," she said, "you have no cause for fear. You heard my intentions from my own lips yesterday. Nothing your son has said or can say will affect them. I desire not to prolong an interview which you reasonably think injurious to his dignity and to yours. Allow me to withdraw ; he will then depart with you."

"I know not, I have no wish to know, the meaning of these cold, mysterious words," interrupted Adalbert furiously. "To Leonore I offered my hand—it was accepted. I told you, madam, that I would present her to you as your daughter-in-law, and I left you, uncertain how far you meant to comply with my request that you would welcome her with a mother's love. I have yet to hear Mademoiselle Körner justify herself for so speedily breaking the faith she had vowed."

Leonore made no reply.

"Oughtest thou not to blush," cried the Countess Justine, "to expose thyself, thy mother, and the woman thou dost profess to love, in such a manner as do thy presence here, thy loud and angry words?"

"Why did Leonore leave the castle?" interrupted Adalbert.

"This is my home," said Leonore, looking

round; "you may easily recognise how little it becomes you to seek a bride in it."

"You have, then, forsaken Nadine?" asked Adalbert reproachfully.

Leonore turned away to conceal her tears.

"Yes, boy," exclaimed the countess. "See how destructive of every one's peace and happiness your ill-advised passion has proved."

"Leonore," said Adalbert, approaching her, and speaking with the tenderest pity, "I go; I go to Nadine. I will speak with her, since you refuse me all explanation. But I will not leave my mother with you. She shall not poison your ear with the heartless maxims of her world. If I withdraw, she must."

The Countess Justine, as she prepared to depart, said:

"I thank you, Mademoiselle Körner, for your truth and honour."

Leonore made no acknowledgment of this speech. She hastened back to her own chamber. There she found Nadine.

"Go," she said, "go," not allowing her to embrace her. "Go to Adalbert; he needs thee. Cherish no false hopes in him. I am unchanged. Go; he needs thee, and I am better alone."

CHAPTER XXV.

"Le coup qui l'a perdu n'est parti que de lui."

RACINE.

LEONORE quitted her chamber no more that day, and it was in vain that Frau Körner invited her to their evening meal; but at a later hour she was again roused by a knock at her door, and the voice of her kinswoman, who cried: "This time you must admit me. I have a note from the Schloss." Leonore unclosed the door, and even Frau Körner could not help being moved to see her look so ill, and saying, "There, I will return for the answer," she left the room to seek a basin of the soup which they had had for their supper, and placing it on the table, expressed her wish that Leonore should partake of it. Leonore thanked her for her kindness, and tearing off a scrap of blank paper from the note which she had received, wrote on it the words, "I will come," and giving it to Frau Körner, begged her

to send that back to the castle. Frau Körner read it as she walked downstairs, and when the messenger had departed she told Karl that Leonore had promised to meet the young count again.

The note which Leonore had received was from Nadine.

“DEAREST Leonore,” it said, “meet me in the wood to-morrow morning at seven. I promise to come alone, and to do everything I can to save you from any harassing visits or letters that you would fain be spared. But my heart bleeds for poor Adalbert, and I cannot desert him.

“NADINE.”

It was a bright, beautiful morning when Leonore took the path she had promised to tread, but she seemed to shrink from the refreshing breeze, and she murmured: “O Nature, do not smile upon me so!” She knew not that Karl watched her as she passed, saying to himself: “Surely, unseen, I may gaze on her. She might not like to be reminded of her poor kinsmen as she goes to meet her noble lover. How haughty was his deportment to me yesterday! Yet I think he cannot be altogether unworthy of

her while he seeks her thus in spite of his proud mother, and esteems it no degradation, but the highest honour, to win her for his bride. And she is about to consent, or she would not go to meet him thus." And Karl, leaning, as his father would have said, idly against a gate, fell to musing on past days, as well as to picturing those to come. He thought of the young count when he wrested the white dove from him, and his generous repentance of his fault ; he thought of his present pride of demeanour ; and, most of all, he thought of him as the object, the enviable object, of Leonore's love. Of that he could not doubt him possessed, and knew that her misery, her happiness, were in his keeping. With such knowledge came the deep desire that whatsoever would accomplish the latter might be fulfilled. He breathed an ardent aspiration for his rival's fidelity. He contemplated the possibility of his infidelity with an indignation foreign to his general temper.

"True to her, I could die for him ; false, with this arm I could strike him dead !" murmured Karl, half aloud, with clenched hand and unwonted fire in his eye.

"Ha ! boy, art mad ?" cried the intendant's voice, recalling him from his trance.

Nadine was earliest at her post, and springing forward to greet her friend, thanked her warmly for complying with her request.

"You know that you come to hear me plead for Adalbert with all the eloquence my love for both you and him can lend, with every argument reflection can suggest. Indeed, Leonore, I have much to say which you must not lightly reject. Shake not your head so mournfully, but, for his sake and your own, listen to me. Surely, if you could accomplish our happiness without violating any law of conscience, you would rather do that than, by complying with the worldly wisdom of the multitude, leave unscathed the pride of the whole race of Lichtenthal?"

Leonore looked as if even she could yield assent to such a proposition as this, but after walking a few steps in silence she replied:

"I could not accomplish his happiness or my own; and if yours depend on ours, that also would be destroyed by the sight of our misery."

"What a term, Leonore! Could you be miserable with Adalbert, or Adalbert with you?"

"Yes," exclaimed Leonore, with a sudden burst of proud impetuosity, "most miserable! If I could myself despise the insolence of the great, I could not endure to see him writhe under each

insult heaped on me. If I could fly with delight from a world which I have little cause to wish to mingle with, I could not bear to see him mourn in seclusion, separation from kinsmen and friends, the forfeiture of royal favour, and of distinction in the noble profession he has embraced, and to know that he lamented the act of youthful madness by which he had incurred these losses. To me and to him alike would this be misery ! ”

“ But it is utterly incompatible with the love he bears you that such regrets should prevail. I do not say they might never arise, but I do say they would ever be subordinate to a stronger feeling. And who can look for unmingled bliss ? If he lose you, that one loss embitters the possession of every other good. If he win you, that treasure will make the absence of a thousand others endurable. Leonore, it is but the few who really love ; and believe me, if they have any regard for the happiness of their future lives, the sacrifice of the beloved object is not for them the wise measure which the worldly-minded will tell them it is. That intimate union of the soul which constitutes love and friendship is its very health. Spread every gift of art and nature before the sick man, and what enjoyment can he derive from them ? Deprive one who has the

elasticity of health of all that Fortune can deny, and he will never feel utterly cast down and depressed. Ah! *I* can feel the truth of all this, and I am sure that the simile is just."

"Be it so," replied Leonore in a faltering voice, "be it so; yet I cannot apply it as you do. I believe that there are hearts in which love, once born, is indestructible, to whose constant nature anything would be more tolerable than the attempt to eradicate an affection. But I tell you, Nadine, this is not so with Adalbert. Had he from the time we parted clung to his boyish love, had the arguments contained in that letter been urged only by others, never by his own heart, I would have forced neither him nor myself to yield them obedience. His love for me is a new passion. He acknowledges it himself. It is not that the companion of his childhood has never been banished from his heart; he loves me as he might any other woman whose beauty met his eye. I am jealous of myself, strange words as these are. There is too little of memory, of constancy, in his love to satisfy me. I dare not build on this foundation, and expect the fabric to be lasting; and what would be my self-reproach were his happiness involved in the ruins! No, Nadine, as long as a union with me includes the

sacrifices he has enumerated, I will never consent to it."

"But they are all such as may be in a great degree mitigated, if not removed; and I will ask only that he may be allowed to make every endeavour to overcome the difficulties that separate you, and if he succeed, reward him."

Leonore could not refuse to listen to these urgent entreaties. The removal of the obstacles which Adalbert had avowed in his letter ought to alter her decision, which was founded wholly on their existence. But she utterly despaired of their removal, and she refused to allow Adalbert or Nadine to decide whether or not they were removed.

"You are both incapable of deceit, but on such a question both liable to deceive yourselves. The judge must be impartial. I cannot select one. Not his cruel, insulting mother; Colonel Von Plessin, who doubtless desires to serve him, and whose fearlessness to offend I admire, though I cannot approve his deed, will never again be admitted to the privileges of a friend. When you can bring such testimony as you candidly think ought to prove convincing, I will hear it. Meanwhile, leave me here. I implore you, nay, I exact it from Adalbert, as the last act of mercy

a broken heart can seek, that he does not attempt to see me again. Let me feel secure that he will not cross my path, that he will not summon me to his presence as he did yesterday. If he hath aught to say that I may listen to, let it reach me through you, Nadine. I do not ask for this forbearance without feeling the necessity for it. My heart, my brain, have suffered more than they can again endure."

Nadine with tears promised Leonore that all that she required should be granted, and returned to plead with Adalbert as earnestly for Leonore's peace as she had pleaded with her for his happiness.

The next morning the Schloss was deserted by its inmates, and Leonore, having implored Adalbert and Nadine to spare her any leave-taking, wept as bitterly over the accordance of her request as if she had meant it to be denied; yet her judgment, and even her heart, forbade her deliberately to wish that it were otherwise. She leaned against an old oak tree in the wood, the very one under which Adalbert had plighted his boyish faith, and which almost against herself she had now sought. As she saw the carriages departing she wept as no human eye had ever seen her weep, and sinking on the green turf, she hid her

face. She heeded not the rustling of the boughs, she heard no approaching step; but when at length she raised her head, Karl was standing a few paces from her, gazing on her with a love and pity to which even in that hour her desolate heart could not be insensible. He hesitated—but for a moment; the next he was kneeling beside her, and held her hand.

“Leonore,” he said, “God afflicts thee. He must comfort thee. O that He would assign me the blessed office of alleviating, were it in the slightest degree, thine anguish!”

The countenance of Karl, as he spoke these words, was beautiful in its tenderness and its truth, and Leonore spontaneously replied:

“That office is thine—it has been thine. Thou knowest that I have felt thy kindness; and now—whom but thee could I bear beside me now?”

The tears, which were Karl’s sole reply to these unpremeditated words, touched Leonore too keenly.

“Do not weep for me,” she said. “Thou knowest not what I feel when I make others weep. Thou must not grieve too deeply, or thine eye shall never look upon my grief again. I will go home.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

“Nature hath assigned
Two sovereign remedies for human grief;
Religion, surest, firmest, first and best,
Strength to the weak, and to the wounded balm;
And strenuous action next.”

SOUTHEY.—*Don Roderic.*

THE monotony of Leonore's days was now only broken by the letters which every post brought her from Nadine, the sole means of cheering her sadness which that tender friend could still devise; and while she wrote so as to prove her undiminished affection, her delicacy, her forgetfulness of self, an earnest desire to lighten Leonore's weight of woe taught her to avoid all such expression of her own melancholy feelings of loneliness as would force Leonore to grieve for

her, or to reproach herself with an absence which even Nadine now recognised as necessary. Of Adalbert she might not speak. His mother was employing with indefatigable industry all those resources which she had told Leonore she had in her power, in order to render his union with her for ever impossible, nor did any of them appear likely to fail her. Months passed, and Nadine dared not hope that Adalbert had gained any new support, or removed one obstacle. His mother's views were embraced by all his family; his sovereign himself had bestowed a kindly but grave admonition, which was repeated in language gentle and affectionate, but still imperative, by one of the royal princesses to Nadine. Adalbert, unaccustomed to the discipline of either grief or constraint, bore both impatiently. Advice he rejected "with an unquiet and intolerant scorn." He was submissive only because he could not bend Leonore's will to his own. Nadine was too convinced of Leonore's inflexibility to hold out any delusive hopes that he would ever find that possible. Meantime the only person with whom he could hold any soothing intercourse was his cousin; her kind sympathy, her entire devotion to his happiness, her disinterested wish to serve him only in the way that he himself should indi-

cate, made him delight to share his sorrows and his sentiments with her. All others he looked on as his enemies; he shunned their society, and resented their attempts to conciliate him as though they were fresh injuries. Nadine, while she believed that in administering solace to Adalbert she did that for which Leonore would most love and bless her, felt that she could not, in her letters, touch on this topic without infringing the strict law by which Leonore had bound her.

Wilhelmine and Sister Joanna were frequently the subjects of Nadine's pages; she had now no pleasure so sweet as to discourse of Leonore beside the couch of the former. This mention brought them back to the memory of Leonore with more constancy and liveliness than had been possible during the past terrible period of excitement, and recalled, too, a train of thought which had often filled her mind when first she knew them, before she had again seen Adalbert. One day, as she was turning over the leaves of a volume which contained records rather of the deep feelings than of the few events of her life, her eye fell on lines expressive of the tone of mind to which we allude. She had written them one evening on returning from the hospital, in

consequence of a little incident she had there observed :—

“ I crossed the hospice door, and stood within
The little garden, sweet with herbs and flowers,
The last to deck the altar and the shrine,
The first to soothe the pangs of suffering men.
Those offerings of fair blossoms are as smile
Of love and gratitude on lip of child
Or woman—tribute to the strength that guards
From every ill, and shelters from the storm.
’Twas eve, the breeze was cool, and dust and din,
And busy hum of men were thence excluded.
An aged nun before a cross of stone
In silent prayer was kneeling, and her eyes
Were fixed on earth ; pale was her furrowed cheek,
And bent her form, as wearied by her toil.
Willing to rest a while, she meekly sought
In evening hour the shadow of the cross,
Day and her day of life alike nigh spent.
It was a sight of peace to see her there !
I could have knelt beside her, but denied
This prompt expression to my inward thought,
I raised my heart to God, and mutely asked
His blessing on her prayers and life of love.

I turned away, and thought her lot was one
Fitter to move our envy than the crown
Ambition wears, or dream of earthly love,
Or life of softness to self-pleasing given.
I sighed, yet not because I stood beneath
The solemn roof of sickness, but because

I might not wear the garb that speaks the world
Renounced, and consecrate the day to round
Of duties arduous, stealing from the night
More hours of service, watching, praying thus,
Ever beside the cross, tending the couch
Of those on whom 'tis laid. These servants mild
Are surely favoured ones, and taste of peace.

A little further, 'neath the grateful shade
Of trees by seats encircled, sat a few,
Seeking refreshment from the evening breeze.
Pale cheeks, spare forms, and languid limbs were theirs,
Yet some in hope of health returning smiled.
Then thought I: 'Sons of lux'ry, hither come,
And taste a bliss, new and surpassing all
Ye e'er have pleasure deemed. By kindly word,
By some small deed of love, light up the fire
Of joy in those dim eyes at your approach.
Bid those thin lips, so oft compressed in pain,
Relax in smiles, and nerve those faltering limbs
To strenuous effort in the fond desire
To haste to meet you. Leave the hope behind
That soon you will return; the sleepless night,
The weary day, 'twill cheer, and in the prayer
Of those who learn to love your presence, oft
Your name with blessings fond shall be rehearsed.'"

After Leonore had accidentally recurred to these verses they seemed to abide with her, and to have more power than when first written. The reading of them was speedily followed by a

letter from Nadine, inclosing one of Wilhelmine's own dictation. It spoke of the fervour of her love, and the blank in her existence caused by Leonore's absence. It contained one of her impetuous, imperative commands. Leonore must return. What ! was she to die without seeing her ?

"Were I a bird, I could fly after thee to thy native woods, and there, if thou art sad (which I think thou art, for tears are in the Countess Nadine's eyes when she speaks of thee), I could sit on a tree, and sing to thee as I have heard the nightingales sing in my childhood when I, too, had woods and a garden to wander in. But I cannot come to thee. Thou must come to me."

Leonore wept. "Is there one being whom I can yet make happier, and shall I refuse to do it ? No, Wilhelmine, I will come."

How little Nadine knew the work in which she was engaged, when, to soothe poor Wilhelmine, she wrote that letter ! How many of our actions which we intend to produce great effects fall fruitless to the ground ! How many of those which we do without a purpose are made the instruments of shaping a whole life !

Another powerful inducement to relinquish her present home was not wanting to Leonore. In spite of the reserve which timidity, delicacy,

and total absence of hope ever imposed on Karl, she could not pass day after day under the same roof with him, and not, great as was the abstraction of her mind, become conscious of the passion that preyed on him to the destruction of his happiness. She felt that to deny herself the solace of his gentle sympathy would but cause him new pain, and be wholly inadequate for the cure of a malady which she now suspected to be of long and silent growth.

"Here," she said, "I am wearing out existence too uselessly. I make none happier, none better. I wring the only heart which beats with affection for me. I will go to Wilhelmine. She alone of all who love me has never derived aught but joy from my presence. I will be her daily nurse and friend. I will share the holy labours of Sister Joanna, perhaps of all labours the most congenial to the servants of Him whose own days on earth were especially marked by their discharge. Yes, this thought is the drop of balm in my cup of woe—it is the first fulfilment of the promise to comfort those who mourn."

In truth, Leonore had never experienced so much alleviation of her misery as she received from this resolution. She wrote to Nadine, and bade her inquire if she might be permitted to find

an asylum in the convent to which Sister Joanna belonged. In reply to this letter Nadine sent one which had just reached her from Paris. It was written by Madame de Château * *, who no sooner learned Leonore's departure from the countess's home than she came forward, and, in terms of affection and admiration which surprised and gratified both, offered her the shelter of her own. With this offer Nadine desired that Leonore might comply. Removal to a distance, and to an abode of so much dignity, she thought might prove every way beneficial to her friend and to Adalbert. Leonore could not refuse to see a certain suitableness in the measure; she also felt a generous wish to repair to the aged marquise, and to perform, in her behalf, all those services which she had once peremptorily demanded for her grandchild. Still, to relinquish the idea of ministering to Wilhelmine cost her tears, and before she had fully resolved on the sacrifice Providence interposed. A second letter brought tidings of the death of the marquise. The sudden warmth and energy with which she had written the first were the last blaze of the expiring light. Madame de Fleury communicated every particular of the departure of her revered friend for the satisfaction of the Countess Nadine.

Of Leonore she made mention thus: "I am in ignorance whether Leonore intended to comply with the dear marquise's proposal, but she knows—has long known—that my home is always open to her." To this kind declaration Leonore at once replied by a negative, decided, though grateful. No duty summoned her to Madame de Fleury's side. That lady was still prosperous and happy, and Leonore felt that her home was even less suited to her now than when first it was offered.

To hear Leonore Körner again so much a subject of discussion disquieted the Countess Justine. The obstinacy of her son's passion made her feel far from secure, though no outward circumstance afforded him any prospect of final success. The high-born lady devised a scheme which she resolved to carry on underground, a deep-laid mine which should in its explosion lay low for ever any hopes still entertained by her son or kinswoman. She, proud as she was, did not disdain to enter into a secret communication with the intendant and his wife, and to urge them, by offers of considerable bribes, to promote a marriage between their son and Leonore. They embraced the project with avidity. The clumsiness of the intendant, and the unfeeling haste

of his wife, soon betrayed its existence to Leonore and to Karl. This fresh act of insult and cruelty rendered her present home intolerable to Leonore. Not less for Karl's sake than her own did she resolve speedily to withdraw from it. His heart now lay bare before her, though he still strove to conceal his feelings as much as was compatible with the extreme simplicity of his character. Never for a moment did he entertain a hope of pleasing Leonore in the character which his mother incessantly urged him to assume. His own constancy taught him the conviction that she could never wean herself from her early love. The sight of his patient grief was one of too much pain for Leonore, and she prepared to take steps to separate herself from him for ever. Eighteen months had elapsed since she parted from Adalbert, and union with him was more than ever hopeless. For his sake, for her own, for Karl, she resolved now to cut short the fruitless effort, and to place herself in a position that should calm all their hearts, by being unchangeable. She repaired to her chief adviser and most revered friend, the chaplain, who resided at the Schloss. He was a good and venerable man, who regarded Nadine and Leonore with no less than parental interest, and was thoroughly ac-

quainted with every feature of their individual characters, and every circumstance of their lives. He hailed the resolution which Leonore laid before him as the dayspring of a future happiness for her even on earth. Apart from the belief which is entertained in the Church of Rome of the sanctity of the impulse which leads to conventual seclusion, he felt convinced that such a course was the only path to peace and utility that was left open to this unhappy orphan, and the only refuge from persecuting foes. He undertook to make known her intention to Nadine, and, in so doing, he earnestly counselled her to offer it no opposition. "She will never," he said, "find any occupation so healthful to herself, as well as so beneficial to others. The fatigues of the body, while so judiciously regulated as not to impair its strength, will, nevertheless, be sufficient to prevent the over-straining of the mind. The shock she has received has been so great that I think, if she had made choice of a convent in which her life would have been purely contemplative, reason might have given way, or existence would have speedily ceased. Now I trust she will regain as much of cheerfulness as she can taste on earth, and that day by day the increasing brightness of her hopes of heaven

may warm and invigorate by their piercing rays."

The tears of Nadine, the more passionate grief of Adalbert, at this announcement, were not witnessed by Leonore. Her task was to wrestle with the rebel thoughts that remained in her own bosom, and with the silent but most moving appeal of Karl's distress.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Nature with folded hands seemed there,
Kneeling at her evening prayer."

LONGFELLOW.

THE eve of Leonore's departure from Lichtenthal had arrived. It was a balmy evening of summer. The heat of the day had been oppressive, and all living creatures, the trees, the flowers, seemed grateful for the refreshing coolness. Karl was lingering at the gate of the garden, waiting the appearance of Leonore, who had given him her promise to walk once more with him on that evening. On one side of the farm lay the woods, which extended to the castle; on the other a hill rose abruptly, which commanded an extensive view from its summit. Leonore came from the house. She had laid aside her peasant dress, which she thought she could not wear with propriety in the residence of the Countess Nadine in —, whither she was the

next day to repair, and had assumed a simple black one, which offered little contrast to that which would in future be her unchanging garb. The brilliancy of her beauty was indeed impaired, but by that very circumstance its charm seemed rather heightened than decreased. She took Karl's silently proffered arm, and he led her towards the eminence of which we have spoken. As they began to mount it the whole landscape was bathed in the gorgeous flood of light which the sun pours forth in his expiring hour. The brilliant hues faded before their eyes, and the cold grey of evening was all that was left. Leonore stopped short, and involuntarily exclaimed :

“Just such is the change in life when the light of hope goes out.”

These were the first words by which their silence had been broken, and they gained no reply from Karl but a sigh. They mounted the hill slowly, and at length reached the summit. Leonore sat down on a bank to rest, and Karl placed himself at her feet. Suddenly he bowed down his head on her knees and wept aloud. Still Leonore spoke not.

“She sat in silence 'neath a cloud of pain.”

All power of utterance was denied her ; no tear

brought relief to the swelling agony of her brain. She passed her thin white fingers through the bright golden curls of Karl's hair as tenderly as a young mother caresses the child of her love. Thus sat they till at length Leonore's sweet voice was heard, and she spoke distinctly, uninterrupted by the gasp or sob of emotion, though in trembling accents :

“Karl, my friend, my loved brother, look up. Behold the fair moon rising over us, and shedding her silver light abroad. I have spoken wrong, impatient words this evening ; look up, and hear me unsay them. I regretted the extinction of the fierce rays of the sun, as if earth must ever wear a mourning garb without them. It is false, Karl. Gaze on yon pale face, and acknowledge it with me. Such is the mild light of religion, that shall illumine the days of those who have lost their earthly hopes—yes, my days ! True, I am the afflicted servant of One who was afflicted for me ; true, the world that was His foe hath been an unloving world to me ; but I am not in darkness nor dreariness. I am not forsaken. I am not miserable, Karl. Weep not for me, for He hath called me under the shadow of His wings. Forget me not, for soon, when thy first grief shall be past, it will be sweet to think of me,

sweet to cherish me in thy faithful breast, and to muse on an hour of meeting to part no more. And thou, thinkest thou that I shall forget thee, Karl, and all thy deeds of love? Never! There shall be no day of thy life, none in which thou shalt taste of happiness and health, or wrestle with temptation, or languish in sickness, or drink the bitter but salutary cup of affliction, in which there shall not be one true heart invoking Heaven's blessing for thee. Now rise, my brother, and let us go home."

Karl, still kneeling before Leonore, held her hands in his, and said, in a voice scarcely audible:

"What have I ever asked? Nothing. And what thou givest I bless thee for, and esteem a thousandfold beyond my deserts. In thy peace I shall find peace, and I shall better bear to think of thee in thy saintly cell than on an earthly throne."

And, as they descended the hill, they spoke other words of hope and love, and when the moonbeams fell on their faces, as they parted at the door of their house, there was on either brow a lovely serenity like her own.

Such was the parting of Leonore with Karl, and her meeting with Nadine partook of the

same chastened nature. Her sole purpose now was to convince all who loved her that though they grieved, yet their grief was not one which "knows not consolation's name." Adalbert had quitted — purposely. He felt that he could not stay where Leonore should be near, yet separated as effectually as by leagues of distance.

Leonore hastened to the hospital. She had resolved herself to make known her decision to Wilhelmine. The poor girl received her with a transport which made Leonore's heart thrill with joy.

"Wilhelmine," she said, leaning tenderly over her bed, "you wept much when we parted, and you love me still as dearly as ever."

"Do I still love you? And why should I not? Shall I love you less because, by separation, I have learnt to know how much I lost in losing you—because I have missed your frequent visits, the pleasure of watching for yon door to open to let one pass who came on purpose to see me—who came because she loved me, and would fain serve me, and gladden me with kind words and actions? And in the night it was something, as I lay awake, to think: 'Now, to-morrow she will be here—perhaps with the dawn.' Or if the dawn passed and you came not, 'Ere evening

closes I shall see her,' I could say. 'And what will she have thought of to say to me? What will she bring that shall soothe and please me, at least for a little, and if not for itself, for her sake who brings it?'"

Leonore pressed nearer to Wilhelmine, and said :

"Would it make you much happier if you thought that I should never leave you more?"

"What mean you?" cried Wilhelmine; and she held her at a greater distance, that her penetrating eyes might pierce through her, and read all this mystery.

"I mean that I am resolved to abide with you and with Sister Joanna till death. Yes; those doors shall close on me, and remove me from a world that has been a bitter and a cruel one to me, and leave me in a little world where I love and am beloved—where I fear not change nor falsehood. Here to dwell is all I ask of peace or happiness below. Here, too, shall be my school. I will learn patience and diligence of Sister Joanna, and resignation and love of you. In my cell I shall be alone with my God; in the hospital I shall be serving Him in close imitation of His own life on earth. My choice is made, Wilhelmine, and it will be a blessed one."

A smile of transcendent sweetness and love diffused itself over Leonore's countenance as she spoke these words, such as no merely earthly emotion could ever have produced. Wilhelmine listened with bewilderment.

"This is impossible! You a nun in this little hospital of ——! It cannot be! You do not know how lowly are those of whom you speak as companions. Here are no noble ladies; they all go to the convent of ——."

"Noble!" repeated Leonore! impetuously. "I am not noble, nor meet companion for nobility. They would spurn me from their board. My father was little better born than your own. I am an orphan without a home, even of the humblest. All the trappings in which you have seen me are false, unmeet for my true condition. A woollen gown like thine had beseemed it better. Had I been left with the relatives who acknowledge the claims of a destitute child to their compassion, I might have become useful to them and dear to them. Had I been a menial in the Countess Nadine's household, I might have been happy in the cheerful discharge of toils lightened by the kind words and sweet countenance of a gracious mistress. Instead of this I was taken as her playmate, and her proud kinsmen designed

that I should be thrown aside with the other toys of her childhood. She planned higher things for me; not all her love could work them. I put an end to her painful struggles by escaping to this sanctuary. My choice is best for her, for myself, for all who have loved me, all whom I have loved. Tell me, Wilhelmine, that you at least will rejoice in it."

Wilhelmine could not answer; she saw Sister Joanna at a little distance, and beckoned to her to approach. Catching her hand, she placed that of Leonore in it, and said, in a voice choked with emotion :

"There, she is coming to be thy sister."

"It is true," whispered Leonore, leaning her head for a moment on the good nun's shoulder; then, disengaging herself from her, she kissed Wilhelmine's forehead, and turned and left the hospital.

The weeks which necessarily must elapse before Leonore could enter the convent she passed in the home of the Countess Nadine, but she declared her invincible repugnance to conform to the usual practice on such an occasion. Those who resolve to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world by making choice of the cloister are accustomed to assume the first, and

to mingle with the last, in a more than common degree, ere they finally take leave of them, either to convince themselves of their unsatisfactoriness, or to convince others that they can withstand their allurements. "This ordeal is unnecessary for me," said Leonore. "I have already gone through it." And the preparation to which she subjected herself was one that appeared better calculated to tune the mind to high and pure thoughts. She felt that she had yet duties to perform, such as it was wise to defer to the last; on the eve of the day of her profession, she spoke to Nadine once more of Adalbert, and she asked what had occurred between him and Colonel Von Plessin.

"Ah! that name is forbidden by Adalbert and by me," replied Nadine, shuddering; "yet is the bearer of it at this moment an object rather of compassion than of aversion. He was so very ill after Adalbert quitted him that his life was despaired of, and after he rallied he applied for leave of absence long enough to enable him to visit Italy, as his sole prospect of permanent recovery. This was readily granted, for he is highly esteemed at court, and I suppose not undeservedly. I really believe that he loved Adalbert, and that hitherto he has been a man

of the strictest honour. How blinded by worldly prejudice must he have been ere he could justify to himself such an act as he has committed! Adalbert will never speak to him, never see him again, could he avoid it. He has already accomplished his exchange into another regiment. But for Colonel Von Plessin's illness Adalbert would have demanded that satisfaction which men think——"

"Thank God," interrupted Leonore, "that anything turned aside the course of revenge and wrath. Tell Adalbert that it was my last request that he never will take such a measure, neither in compliance with the impetuosity of his own nature, nor the proud, evil counsellings of others. Let him forgive. And now, Nadine, I must see his mother once more."

Leonore entered the apartment in which the Countess Justine awaited her, (not without feelings of fear, and even of remorse,) and advancing to her, said in a calm, firm voice :

"Madam, I do not ask your pardon, for I do not feel that I have injured you. I think I have somewhat to forgive, and I come to tell you that all is forgiven."

She held out her hand. The countess accepted it, but pride and anger struggled with

shame on her countenance. Leonore, who little expected to waken good or tender feelings in such a breast, quitted her ere she could force herself to reply.

The two friends rose at dawn, and Nadine with her own hands arrayed Leonore for the last time in all the costly attire which she had once loved to share with her, but which she had learned to regard as the odious sign of the impassable gulf which yawned between them. As she placed on her friend's brow the circlet of diamonds, she remembered how Leonore had once constrained her to wear them.

The history of Leonore was well known in —, and the concourse of persons of rank and fashion desirous to witness her profession was expected to be great. Nadine, a frequent visitor at the convent, had obtained permission to attend the ceremony with the nuns, and was thus spared what she felt herself quite unequal to encounter, the gaze and the comment of the crowd, to both of which Leonore felt that she should be insensible. Entering the church from the side of the convent, Leonore placed herself in the seat prepared for her near the pulpit, whence the preacher addressed to her a discourse on the state of life which she was about to embrace.

Her eyes were fixed on him, and she appeared quite unconscious that the gaze of a multitude was directed to her ; yet she could not follow what he said. He spoke too much of the physical sufferings of the saints, of those first which God appoints them, and then, with a mistaken praise, related those which they had appointed themselves. Leonore was thinking of the keener pangs of mental anguish. She could not fix her attention as she desired and strove to do, but she felt that she was in spirit leaning on the Cross, and that she was supported, and once she heard the words : " Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This sentence continued to sound in her ears to the exclusion of all others. And when the priest took her hand, and led her behind the grating, she said inwardly, " I come, and Thou wilt not cast out any who come to Thee."

And now the curious multitude could discern little ; not even those who pressed nearest, and contended most eagerly for the sight, could distinguish the weeping, shrinking Nadine among the group of nuns. They saw the glitter of the diamonds as the priest laid them on a table beside him. They saw him raise the scissors, and

Leonore kneeling before him, the abundant tresses of her long black hair covering her white robe. They saw them fall to the ground.

In another part of the church there was a confusion which distracted the attention of those near from the great object of interest. "He has fainted!" passed from mouth to mouth; and, by dint of much exertion, a young man in a state of insensibility was carried through the crowd into the open air. It was Adalbert. Unknown to any of his friends, almost in spite of himself, he had returned to the capital, and sought the spot on which he might behold Leonore once more, only once more!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“Ainsi votre raison n’est pas raison pour moi.”

CORNEILLE.

It was in the spring of the following year that the Countess Nadine attended one of the brilliant garden parties which at that season were the favourite entertainments of ——. Among the guests was one whom she had never seen before, and who quickly fixed her attention, without her being able to decide whether the sensation she felt was pleasurable or painful in its nature, or whether it proceeded wholly from a perception that the stranger regarded her with no ordinary interest, while yet there were an embarrassment and timidity in his manner which it did not seem probable that he would shake off sufficiently to seek her acquaintance, and which nevertheless agreed little with his otherwise calm and manly bearing, and were unsuited to his age, for he was not very young, though the pallor of ill health

made him, perhaps, appear older than he was. His countenance and his voice soon struck Nadine as among the most agreeable she had ever known. At length she heard him addressed in a friendly tone of surprise.

“Ha, Von Plessin ! you here ? Just returned from Italy—is it not so ?”

Nadine started and shuddered. She felt herself grow pale, and hastily retreating, turned down a solitary path to recover her composure, resolving to quit the party as soon as possible. In another moment she was surprised, even to indignation, to see Colonel Von Plessin at her side.

“Madam,” he said, “I know—I feel—I read it on your countenance the moment you heard my name, that I am most unfortunately one whom you have learned to hate.”

“You name a sentiment,” replied Nadine, with more self-command than she had hoped to attain, “which I trust will never find admittance to my breast ; but you are right in believing that my eyes cannot rest on you but with pain—that I cannot recall your connection with the past without strong feelings of aversion.”

Though Gustav had invited this avowal he was nevertheless deeply wounded by its decided expression.

"Madam," he said, "all expressions of esteem from a person whom you thus regard cannot fail to be offensive; yet I entreat you to permit me once to declare that I do entertain that sentiment so strongly that I would earnestly inquire why my conduct has incurred such heavy blame."

"What!" interrupted Nadine with irrepressible emotion, "had I not accomplished the happiness of the two beings I loved best in the world, and who best deserved my love, and did you not dash the cup from their lips?"

The face of the young countess confessed that it was difficult to her to forgive.

"It is but justice to myself," returned Gustav, "to remind you that it was in consequence of a sincere affection for Adalbert, and a firm conviction that his happiness would be marred, not made, that I took the step which destroyed your work. And did I not judge him out of his own mouth? while, for the friend towards whom you think I have shown so much cruelty, it was my belief that I should spare her years of misery by opening her eyes at once to the fatal truth. Stern was the expedient——"

"You judged him out of his own mouth!" cried Nadine, unable to listen longer. "No, no; that I deny. It was not Adalbert who spoke in

that letter. He was under the influence of the corrupt atmosphere which poisoned his very nature. With the companions of his youth it vindicated itself, regained its purity, and had strength to shake off the fetters imposed on it. Yes ; again with Leonore, he felt how despicable, how unreal, was all for which you had proposed to him to barter the devotion of one noble heart. All reality of suffering the wealth I would have shared with them averted. The malignant whispers of the world our castle walls would have shut out. There he might have led a life far more for his happiness and honour, and for the welfare of his fellow-creatures, than the routine of a court will ever afford him. It is impossible to me to behold you with any sentiments but those of condemnation as long as I remember these things. If you wish to hear none but words of pardon and of peace, go to the grate which shuts out from the world all it contained of fairest and of best, and hear them there." Nadine turned away, and shed tears which she could no longer repress. "Go !" she added ; "I pardon you all the havoc you committed, because I know it was allowed by an overruling Providence, who will force all evil doings to minister to good."

Gustav, overcome by emotions more tender than he had ever before experienced, exclaimed :

"I go. I will never again willingly inflict on you the pain of this moment ; and if, in spite of yourself, your thoughts recur to me, at least let the anguish it costs me to behold the tears which I have wrung from you in some measure atone for what you esteem a crime."

Gustav withdrew, and when calm and alone he found that the hasty words which he had spoken in a moment of emotion had still in no way exaggerated what he continued to feel. He could not lose the sense of pain, nor close his eyes to the picture his memory drew of Nadine in tears.

"I shall see her no more," he said ; "and why should I wish it? Her sentiments are utterly opposed to all that I have held to be the dictates of sound reason. She contemns all that I have conscientiously performed. How wide a difference between us ! How mistaken must one of us be in our estimation of things ! And yet I feel that I would sooner hear her revoke her blame than win the approbation of any other woman I have ever seen, or even of my own heart, for at this moment I doubt its dictates as I never doubted them before."

Prudent and sagacious as was Colonel Von

Plessin, such were the thoughts which, in spite of himself, crossed his mind ; and abandoning the attempt to banish them, he actually fell to castle building, an employment so delightful that not even at the mature age of thirty-five can it be wholly relinquished, and which, perhaps, is not so vain and unprofitable as at first sight it appears. Do we never return from such dreams with a higher aim, a more generous purpose, than we should conceive if we were always grovelling and delving on earth ? The pleasant shades of Lichtenthal flitted before Gustav's eyes. He was there with Nadine ; Adalbert and Leonore were at their side, happy, and owing their happiness to them. Yes ; he was no longer the blaster of all Nadine's generous schemes, but her fellow-worker, rewarded by her heart, leading that higher, purer life of which she had spoken. Gustav started—a humiliating suspicion flashed across his mind. Was all this revulsion in his sentiments produced by a hastily conceived passion ? Was he now only thinking how he could best have served himself, while formerly he had only thought how he could best serve his friend ? This doubt put him on his guard, but he could not regain that satisfaction which he had once possessed, nor feel that he had forfeited Adal-

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bert's friendship, and all hope of Nadine's love, without any fault in himself. Conventional rules, he began to think, might be very good and wise, but every rule has its exception, and they should scarcely be permitted remorselessly to crush feelings which no higher principle condemns. Moreover, Gustav had never been able wholly to blind himself to the fact that the line of action which he had laid down for Adalbert he should not have pursued himself, had he loved Leonore. The friendship between Adalbert and Gustav was indeed irretrievably destroyed. Consideration for it, and for the last injunctions of Leonore, prevented Adalbert from manifesting his resentment as he otherwise would, but he never could resume any intercourse with one who had made his confidence the means of fettering his movements, and deprived him of all control over circumstances which so much concerned his happiness. Adalbert did not lose the wish to recall the past, but he had a buoyancy of nature that prevented him from cherishing sorrow with a pertinacity which seems to show a love for it. He desired to escape its thralldom, and it was in the society of Nadine, who he knew would have sacrificed everything she could command, and herself most readily of all, rather than that he

should have been grieved and thwarted, that he found most happiness and peace.

Five years had elapsed since Leonore had taken the veil in the convent of —, and she had never regretted the act. She was useful, she was beloved by those whom she served. She had turned from her sorrows with an energetic resolution to acquiesce in Heaven's will, to live to suffer and to labour. "Give me my task," she had prayed, "in Thy vineyard, O Lord! There must be somewhat that even I can do. If it be but to train up the weak suckling, to water the parched plant, to support the drooping stem, to free the ripening fruit from the enemy that infests it—whatever I can discern, grant me will and power to perform, even in the heat and burden of the day, for that now approaches. The sweetness of morn, its freshness and its hopes, are past. Many long hours may elapse ere the peace of eve arrives, and the silence of the night, when the weary may rest."

Whensoever Nadine crossed the threshold of the convent her presence brought pleasure and refreshment to Leonore; and if their pursuits, hopes, and aims in the outward details of life were now different, they shared as they had never shared them until they had mourned

together, the higher thoughts of eternity, and loved each other with "a spirit's love."

One day when Nadine came, the penetrating eye of Leonore immediately detected an embarrassment and reserve that had never marked their interviews before.

"Nadine," she said earnestly, "I see plainly that this is more than an ordinary visit. Something weighs on your mind. No misfortune threatens you? Relieve my apprehensions."

"They are uncalled for," replied the young countess, though her extreme paleness and the trembling of her limbs seemed to contradict her words. "I have, indeed, somewhat to communicate, but I trust that it threatens no diminution of happiness to any to whom it relates."

She drew nearer as she spoke, a crimson glow mounted on her cheek, she hid her face on Leonore's shoulder.

"I see it all now," cried Leonore; "thou hast given away this little heart that is throbbing as if it would escape from thy bosom. Now God grant it may be to one worthy of such a treasure! Speak, dearest, speak to thy friend."

"I come," whispered Nadine tremulously, "to tell thee what no other tongue but mine shall tell. I have indeed promised my hand——"

"To whom?" asked Leonore.

"To my cousin—to Adalbert."

Nadine felt Leonore shrink away from her; the impulse was momentary, and it cost how many remorseful tears! Nadine felt as if she could have fallen at Leonore's feet to ask for pardon. Leonore bent down her head, and kissing her tenderly, said:

"The blessing of Heaven abide with you both!"

"Oh, Leonore!" cried Nadine earnestly, "my whole life will be devoted to his happiness. Will you not pray that my endeavours to promote it may be availing?"

"I will," replied Leonore, gazing steadfastly into the appealing eyes which Nadine had raised to her face. Nadine could not sustain the gaze, and she hid her face again on Leonore's shoulder. In a low, subdued voice Leonore said:

"I know it all now, Nadine. Thou hast loved him always" (Nadine made no reply); "and I, my selfish heart thought of and felt no pangs save its own. Be happy, Nadine, be happy. You deserve happiness, for you seek it only in bestowing it."

THE END.





